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77

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- AQUARIAN AGE
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Editorial Staff

Claude J. Pelletier [CJP] – Publisher / Editor-in-chief
editor@protoculture-mag.com
Miyako Matsuda [MM] – Editor / Translator
Martin Ouellette [MO] – Editor

Contributing Editors

Aaron K. Dawe, Keith Dawe, Kevin Lillard, Gerry Poulos, Laura Powderham, James S. Taylor

Production Assistants

Safe House (Layout), Dominique Durocher (Proofreading), Aaron & Keith Dawe (Editing)

Printing

Payette & Simms (St-Lambert, Qc)

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STAND ALONE COMPLEX. "Is Cyber Terrorism The Crime Of The Future?" In this issue, we present to you one of the best TV anime shows we have seen so far: *Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex.* In the 1990's, the *Ghost In The Shell* theatrical movie created a sensation in the entertainment industry, not only in Japan, but also in North America, influencing young movie directors such as the Wachowski brothers (*The Matrix*). Many years later, we are fortunate to see this TV series treating the future use of cyber crimes with such depth. I can imagine that the creators of this show had to work out every elaborate detail of the cyber crimes extremely carefully so that they make sense to the viewers. And I am sure that the creators were under great pressure to come up with such a show for their audience. You will not be disappointed! Every attempt you'll make to solve the crimes will certainly prove to be pleasantly erroneous, thus giving you a very satisfying show that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

In this show, "The Laughing Man" is a mysterious and legendary cyber-terrorist set against the large conglomerates. What is his ultimate goal? In reality, as we are going through the war against terrorism, what are we doing about cyberspace terrorism? In *Stand Alone Complex*, the crime techniques of "The Laughing Man" are so complex and ask for such skills that he draws out admirers who become copycats of him! In ancient times, through the course of human evolution, man developed his capacity for violence because violence was useful for survival. Aggressive men controlled the territory, women, food and other resources necessary for survival. Then, when science and technology took over and people were pretty much taken care of (i.e. basic needs for every day survival, such as food, clothing, shelter), the nature of violence and crime changed! We all know that frustration often leads to aggression and crime, but what is the motive of cyber terrorists such as "The Laughing Man"?

The heroine of the show, Major Motoko Kusanagi, wears extremely skimpy clothing (as a public police woman?!) to get viewers' attention, but she IS very competent for her post as a crime fighter. "The Laughing Man" becomes Major Kusanagi's greatest and most mysterious enemy. What kind of weird criminal is this person? Just like the *GITS* movie with the "Puppet Master", "The Laughing Man's" presence really adds to the story. This enemy literally steals the information contained in the senses of perception through the NET (i.e. the electronic brain) and the virtual world computers. As we live in a more and more complicated computer world, the stresses of our lives can also influence our psychological functioning. The frequency of stressful life events is associated with feelings of depression, paranoia, aggression, anxiety, distress and tension and all those can lead to crime. Each episode of *Stand Alone Complex* shows the characters' psychological state and we can see how crimes are committed. The emotions of those characters, such as anger, jealousy and fear lead to psychological harm to others. We see many social misfits in this show and they tend to be less well-equipped to cope with stress and reality, in part because that are truly lacking in social support. The theme of this show, *Stand Alone Complex*, is that we, literally, must "stand alone in this very complex cyber world". And yet, how can we cope with all the loneliness and lack of human warmth? Are we really heading for this cold cyber-space world? Major Kusanagi seems to be enjoying the moment when the crime is solved and shows pride and even a bit of sympathy. Emotions can be distressing, as well as gratifying in our lives, but those emotions are the essential part of being "human".

Like it or not, technology will keep on going and it will be more and more developed and we will have to deal with new types of crimes. Are we equipped to handle them?

Miyako Matsuda

• • •

Unfortunately, the printer we started to work with in order to have a nice glossy paper doesn't seem reliable (on the five issues they printed, three had major glitches). So we will have to go back with the old printer (and the old paper) for a while. Don't worry, we will nevertheless continue to improve the magazine and eventually find a reliable printer that can offer us glossy paper at a reasonable price. That will certainly not affect the quality of the contents, as we will continue to do our best to give you the most useful information, making of *Protoculture Addicts* your best guide to anime culture!

In this issue you will find spotlights on the *Ghost In The Shell* TV Series *Stand Alone Complex* and *Zetsuai* (a popular shoujo OVA from 1996) as well as our usual collection of "Anime Stories", introducing anime like *Alien 9, Aquarian Age, Kaze no Yojimbo, King Of Bandit Jing, Siamese Cats*, and *Witch Hunter Robin*!! It also includes "Anime World" articles (interview with a Amy Howard-Wilson, The Modern Japanese Music Database Part 21 on Mai Kuraki, convention & festival reports: more Montreal World Film Festival movie reviews (*Lily Festival*, *Oriume*), Sugoicon, C-kon, Ohayocon, Ushicon, Tekkoshocon), the reviews of lots of recent anime & manga-related products (45 DVDs, 2 CDs, 26 manga, 1 book, 3 model kits, 2 live-action movies, etc.) and the latest news. Enjoy!

As usual, we would like to hear your comments, read your letters and see your fan arts. Send them either to comments@protoculture.qc.ca or P.O. Box 1433, Station B, Montreal, Qc, H3B 3L2 Canada.

Next Issue: a spotlight on *Zeta Gundam* (to be released by Bandai next year) and more "Anime Stories" on *Heatguy J, Kiddy Grade, Macross Zero, Samurai Deeper Kyo, Spiral, Twelve Kingdoms, Wolf's Rain*, etc.!! Don't miss it! Check our web page for details: www.protoculture-mag.com!

Claude J. Pelletier
editor@protoculture-mag.com

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• JAPAN • JAPAN • JAPAN •

Kazuo Koike School Is Opened! Legendary mangaka Kazuo Koike, who became famous worldwide due to the success of his *Lone Wolf & Cub* saga, has opened a school to bring in new talents to the manga and anime industry. He opened his school on June 7, 2003. Actually, he had his own school from 1977 to 1988, until he was too busy with his private work as a novelist and professor at the Osaka Art University. 15 years after he closed it, his school is now reopened! From his school, many talented artists became famous, such as Rumiko Takahashi (*Ranma 1/2*, *Lum*), Tetsuo Hara (*Fist Of The North Star*), etc. Many famous manga/anime/video game artists will be coming to Koike's school to teach the know-how to be a manga/anime artist. It is part of the Tohoku Shinsha company movie school, the Tohokushinsha Group Institute. Koike himself is teaching students about manga and creating images and characters so they can become the successful manga/anime hit makers of the future. Rumiko Takahashi, Kazuo Koike, Ryoichi Ikegami (*Crying Freeman*), Tetsuo Hara, Yuji Horii and Keisuke Itagaki will be coming to this school to teach! For more information: Tohoku Shinsha School, (tel) 03-3352-7084. www.vta.tfc.co.jp. Address: Shinjuku Building, Tohoku-Shinsha, 1-18-14, Shinjuku. Shinjuku-Ku. Tokyo. 160-0022 Japan. (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003)

***Mazin Kaizer* OVA: Big Match! Great General Dark.** This new OVA presents a dream cast of characters from *Mazinger Z* and *Great Mazinger*. Koji Kabuto pilots Mazin Kaizer and, this time, the enemy is Great General Dark from the Mikene underground empire. This character appeared in the 1974 *Mazinger Z VS Great General Dark* theatrical movie. When Mazin Kaizer left Japan, the fighting beasts appeared to get rid of Great Mazinger and Tetsuya. Grand Duke Gorgon also shows up. Great Mazinger is in great danger. Can Sayaka help? Directed by Masahiko Murata, Mazinger designs by Kei-ichi Sato. The animation is produced by Brain Base Studio. On sale July 25th, 2003! © 2003 Go Nagai/Dynamic Planning. (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003)

MODEL NEWS: The Shizuoka Hobby Show, which took place from May 15-18 in Japan, was the occasion for many Japanese model firms to showcase their next products. Bandai, of course, has the greatest selection of cool stuff. *Star Trek* fans could see a mock-up of the upcoming **Enterprise-E**, which will come pre-painted, just like the A released about two months ago. On the *Gundam* front, mock-ups of the **1/100 MG MSM-07 Z'Gok** and **MSM-03 Gogg**, as well as *Gundam Seed*'s **1/100 Freedom Gundam** and **Duel Gundam** were displayed. A mock-up of the upcoming **HGUC 1/144 MSM-03C Hygogg** was also there. Rumors of a **HGUC 1/144 MSM-07E Zuggock-E** and a **RGM-79D GM "Cold Weather"** (as seen at the very beginning of *Gundam 0080*) seem to be flying about, but there are no news about the MGs coming out after the Z'Gok and the Gogg. Hasegawa has announced that the **VF-1S Strike Battroid** will be their last classic *Macross* release for a while, but announced their **1/72 VF-0 Fighter** (from *Macross Zero*) for next Winter. Kotobukiya will be releasing their very first Plastic Injection kit of the **1/144 Huckebein** from the *Super Robot Wars* video game. More details as they become available... (Compiled by MO)

Otomo's *Steamboy* Update! Since the time of our report (PA #75) about director/manga artist Katsuhiro Otomo's latest theatrical anime movie project *Steamboy*, we have gathered some new information. 15 years after the worldwide success of *Akira*, Japanimation fans all over the world are now waiting for *Steamboy*, which will be theatrically released in October 2003 in Japan. The animation is by Sunrise (*Gundam*), the movie is directed and screenplayed by Otomo himself (with the help of Sadayuki Murai for the latter) and there will be a lot of computer graphics. Hollywood musician Steve Jabronski (who did the music score for *Hannibal*) joins the *Steamboy* team to bring a moving soundtrack to the movie. The story takes place in good old 19th-century Britain. Raymond, a young boy, loves to create and work on machinery. One day, he receives a very mysterious metal ball. This is when his adventures begin! Suspicious men come to chase him. He is caught and then brought to the World Expo's pavilion. This is where he meets his father, who tells him an amazing fact! How will the Steamball bring on humanity's future? Director Otomo chose this exciting era of Victorian 19th-century Britain where the industrial revolution was taking place and it seemed that people had lots of dreams about the future and technology. Viewers (especially those who love mecha) can look forward to this young boy's science fiction/adventure story. © 2003 Katsuhiro Otomo/Mushroom/Steamboy Production Committee. (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003)

***R.O.D.* The TV Series.** Thanks to its OVA success, *R.O.D.* becomes a TV series! However, this time, the main character is Nenene from the novel version. Nenene is a 22 year-old popular novelist. She is extremely proud and stubborn, and yet, she has a very soft heart. She uses papers to fight her enemies. She gets involved with three sisters who also use paper as weapons. This TV series was created by J.C. Staff and the animation produced by Aniplex. This is apparently a different series than the previously announced *Read Or Dream* title and it has already been acquired by Pioneer for a North American release. © Studio Orphe/Aniplex. (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003 & ANN)

***Appleseed* The Movie.** The starting point of Shirow's success in the manga industry, *Appleseed*, will become a full-length theatrical movie for Spring 2004. The animation will use full 3D computer graphics and Motion Capture technique (human movements are traced in order to bring more fluidity to the animated characters' movements). Shirow fans will now be able to see the death match between humans and Bioroids. © Masamune Shirow/Seishinsha/Appleseed Film Partners. (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003)

***Cutey Honey* Live Action!** According to Warner Japan, Hideaki Anno is directing a live action movie of Go Nagai's anime. Eriko Satoh stars as Honey and the movie should be released next year. (Source: ANN)

Japan Extends Copyrights term from 50 to 70 years. Toho and other companies argued their cases in front of the Diet who agreed to change the copyright law. This will allow many Kurosawa, Mizoguchi and Ozu movie classics not to enter public domain before another twenty years. (Source: ANN)

***Macross Zero* Chapter 2: The Star Above The Ground.** The second volume of the series was finally put on sale on May 23. This second chapter offers new mecha and new characters, such as Ivanov, Roy Fokker's old enemy, and Nora, who shot down Shin's plane in episode #1. The animation is produced by Studio Satellite. Shoji Kawamori directs, writes the original story and does all mecha designs. Old fans of *Macross* will certainly enjoy this OVA series! © 2002 Big West/Macross Zero Production Committee. (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003)

Pioneer LCD To Be Sold To Dentsu. According to Nikkei Net, Pioneer Japan will sell its "software" subsidiary Pioneer LDC to Dentsu, in order to concentrate their activities on A/V hardware. If this deal might affect Pioneer Japanese label, it is unlikely to affect the U.S. label. (Source: ANN)

***Sailor Moon* Live Action!!** In the July issue of Young You magazine, Naoko Takeuchi announced a new *Sailor Moon* TV series, this time a live action show, to air on Japanese TV this fall! (Source: ANN)

Studio Ghibli's Designs Used as Commercial Art! Risona Bank asked Studio Ghibli to produce character designs for their TV ads, brochures, bankbooks and bank cards! Takeshi Inamura, Ghibli's rising star, created the Ichimuras, a fictitious family appearing in *The Story of Hibiki-ga-oka* (The Hill Of Peal), the bank's TV commercial. More and more anime & manga characters are used as commercial art in Japan. Recently, Miyazaki produced three 30-seconds TV spots for a Japanese Food Chain. You can even get a *Big O* or a *Gundam* Visa Card! (Source: *Animage* #300, June 2003 & *Animeland* #93)

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NINJA SCROLL TV SERIES #1	UV	B	90	19.95		09/02
DBZ: FUSION BOX SET (Edited)	FN			59.95	G	09/16
DBZ: FUSION BOX SET (Uncut)	FN			79.95	13+	09/16
YUGIHO #13: MATCH OF THE MILLENIUM PT 2 (Edited)	FN	D	60	14.95	G	09/16
BEYBLADE #5	P	D	100	9.98	7+	10/14

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CRYING FREEMAN #3: ABDUCTION IN CHINATOWN	ADV	B	100	29.98	17+	06/17
GENESIS CLIMBER MOSPEADA BOX SET (25 Eps)	ADV	S	625	89.98	15+	06/17
RAHXEPHON #3: HARMONIC	ADV	B	75	29.98	15+	06/17
STEAM DETECTIVES #1	ADV	B	125	29.98		06/17
STEAM DETECTIVES #1 W/ BOX	ADV	B	125	39.98		06/17
CREST OF THE STARS COLLECTORS SET	B	B	325	49.98	13+	06/17
MOBILE FIGHTER G GUNDAM #10~12	B	B	100 ea	19.98 ea	13+	06/17
MOBILE FIGHTER G GUNDAM BOX SET #4	B	B	300	49.98	13+	06/17
DRAGONBALL Z: BABIDI SAGA BOX SET (Uncut)	FN			57.95	13+	06/17
BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM LIM. ED. COLL. ULTRA BOX	RS	B	485	79.99	15+	06/17
DRAGON KNIGHT, WHEEL OF TIME #1: RETURN TO…	SC		60	29.98		06/17
REIGN, THE CONQUEROR #3: DOMINATION (Eps 8-10)	TP	B	100	29.99	16+	06/17
SAMURAI GIRL REAL BOUT HIGH SCHOOL BOX SET	TP	B	525	79.99	13+	06/17
DEVIL LADY (THE) #5: THE PURGING	ADV	B	100	29.98	17+	06/24
MAZINKAISER #2	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	06/24
NOIR #4: DEATH WARRANT	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	06/24
SUPER GALS #1	ADV	B	125	29.98		06/24
SUPER GALS #1 W/ BOX	ADV	B	125	39.98		06/24
GUN FRONTIER #2: MIDNIGHT SAMURAI	AW		100	29.95		06/24
IF I SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS (TV)	AW		120	24.95		06/24
MIRAGE OF BLAZE #1: THE SUMMONING	AW	B	100	24.95		06/24
MIRAGE OF BLAZE #1: THE SUMMONING W/ BOX	AW	B	100	39.95		06/24
SAMURAI DEEPER KYO #1: THE DEMON AWAKEN	AW	B	125	29.95		06/24
SAMURAI DEEPER KYO #1 W/ BOX	AW	B	125	44.95		06/24
Ys BOOK 2: CASTLE IN THE HEAVEN	AW	B	120	29.95		06/24
COWBOY BEBOP: THE MOVIE	CTS	M	114	26.95	R	06/24
BIBLE BLACK #3: ORIGINS	KM		60	29.95		06/24
KAIDOHMARU	ME	B	60	24.95		06/24
VIRUS BUSTER SERGE #3	ME	B	120	24.95	13+	06/24
AI YORI AOSHI #3: HUGS & KISSES	P	B	125	29.98	13+	06/24
BEYBLADE #3: THE HIDDEN TIGER	P	D	125	19.98	7+	06/24
GATE KEEPERS 21 #2: THE FINAL GATE	P	B	75	29.98	13+	06/24
HIS AND HER CIRCUMST. #4: FORMULATION OF TRUTH…	RS	B	150	29.95	13+	06/24
KO BEAST #1: PASSWORD TO TREASURE!	RS	B	90	24.95	13+	06/24
YAMAMOTO YOHKO, STARSHIP GIRL COLLECTION	RS	B	180	19.98	15+	06/24
COUNTDOWN CONJOINED!	SC		50	29.98		06/24
NEW ANGEL COLLECTION #2	SC		75	29.98		06/24
POKEMON: CRASH OF THE DAIRY	VV			19.98		06/24
POKEMON: JOURNEY TO THE JOHTO LEAGUE CHAMP. #3	VV		162	19.98		06/24
INU-YASHA #7: SECRETS OF THE PAST	VV	B	78	24.98		06/24
MEDABOTS #10: WORLD-CLASS MEDABOTS (Eps 40-43)	ADV	D	100	14.98	G	07/01
Z.O.E., DOLORES I #5: ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	07/01
ANGEL LINKS COLLECTORS SET	B	B	325	49.98	13+	07/01
ADVENTURES OF MINI-GODDESS BOX (14 Eps)	P	B	400	79.98	13+	07/01
EL HAZARD: THE ALTERNATIVE WORLD BOX (14 Eps)	P	B	325	79.98	13+	07/01
EL HAZARD: THE WANDERERS DVD BOX SPECIAL (26 Eps)	P	B	650	79.98	13+	07/01
NieA UNDER 7 DVD BOX SPECIAL (14 Eps)	P	B	325	79.98	13+	07/01-
SOL BIANCA: THE LEGACY DVD BOX SPECIAL (6 Eps)	P	B	180	59.98	13+	07/01
CORRECTOR YUI #1: LET'S GO TO COMNET	VV	B	125	24.98		07/01
MAISON IKKOKU BOX SET #1	VV		300	49.98		07/01
NIGHTMARE CAMPUS #3	A18	B	40	29.99	18+	07/08
VENUS FIVE	A18	B	106	29.99	18+	07/08
SAKURA WARS TV #2: OVERTURE	ADV	B	100	29.98	12+	07/08
WILD ARMS #5: SHEYENNE'S LAST STAND	ADV	B	125	29.98	12+	07/08
OMISHI MAGICAL THEATER: RISKY SAFETY #1 (Eps 1-8)	AN	B	80	29.95	G	07/08
.HACK//SIGN #3: GESTALT (LIMITED EDITION W/ CD)	B	B	100	39.98	13+	07/08
ONEGAI TEACHER #2: MEET THE IN-LAWS	B	B	75	29.98	16+	07/08
YUYU HAKUSHO #15: SETTLE THE SCORE (Uncut)	FN	B	62	24.95	13+	07/08
YUYU HAKUSHO #16: YOKO KURAMA (Uncut)	FN	B	62	24.95	13+	07/08
CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #16: FRIENDS IN NEED (Eps 60-63)	P	S	100	29.98	13+	07/08
CHOBITS #3: DARKNESS DESCENDS (Eps 9-12)	P	B	100	29.98	16+	07/08
LUPIN III TV #3: THE FAMILY JEWELS (Eps 13-17)	P	B	125	24.98	13+	07/08
REV. GIRL UTENA #7: TEMPTATION (Eps 27-30)	SS	B	100	29.99	13+	07/08
ALIEN 9	USM	B	100	29.99	13+	07/08
ART OF FIGHTING	USM	B	46	19.99	13+	07/08
BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN: UNCUT VERSION	USM	B	60	19.99	13+	07/08
DESCENDANTS OF DARKNESS #4: DEMON RECKONING	USM	B	100	29.99	13+	07/08
DESCENDANTS OF DARKNESS BOX SET	USM	B	325	99.99	13+	07/08
AURA BATTLER DUNBINE #1: TALES OF BYSTON WELL	ADV	B	125	29.98	12+	07/15
AURA BATTLER DUNBINE #1 W/ MEMORIAL BOX	ADV	B	125	39.98	12+	07/15
EDEN BOWY #2: HOT PURSUIT	ADV	B	125	29.98	12+	07/15
SAILOR MOON: SEASON ONE UNCUT (46 Eps)	ADV	S	1060	149.98	15+	07/15
.HACK//SIGN #3: GESTALT	B	B	100	29.98	13+	07/15
GENESHAFT #2: HALO	B	B	75	29.98	13+	07/15
JUBEI-CHAN COLLECTORS SET	B	B	390	49.98	13+	07/15
s.CRY.ed #1: THE LOST GROUND (LIMITED ED. W/ BOX)	B	B	125	49.98	13+	07/15
s.CRY.ed #1: THE LOST GROUND (Eps 1-5)	B	B	125	29.98	13+	07/15
DRAGONBALL: PICCOLO JR SAGA PT 1	FN	B	375	39.95	13+	07/15
DRAGONBALL GT #5 RAMIFICATIONS / #6 PREPARATION	FN	B	62 ea	24.95 ea	13+	07/15
KIMBA THE WHITE LION #3-4	RH	D	175 ea	19.95 ea	G	07/15

Continues on page 8

• LIVE-ACTION •

Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis	ADV	S	135	19.98	17+	DEL
Angel Of Darkness #4	CM	S	76	29.95	18+	05/06
LoneWolf & Cub#2 DVD	AE					05/07
Zero Woman: The Accused (R-Rated Version)	APC	B	77	29.99	R	05/13
Yokai Monsters #1: Spook Warfare	ADV	S	90	29.98	12+	05/20
Sex Medusa	TS					May
Gamera #3: Revenge Of Iris	ADV	B	110	19.98	12+	06/10
Angel Of Darkness #5	CM	S	72	29.95	18+	06/17
Angel Of Darkness Collection	CM	S	362	129.95	18+	06/17
Princess Blade	ADV	B				Early 03
Beautiful Weapon	APC	B	94	29.99		07/08
Yokai Monsters #2: 100 Monsters	ADV	S	90	19.98	12+	07/15
Onmyoji: The Ying Yang Master	P	B	116	19.98	R	08/12
Onmyoji: The Ying Yang Master Sp. Ed. (Booklet, 50 min. extra)	P	B	116	29.98	R	08/12
Scorpion's Revenge	APC	B	86	29.99		09/09

• SOUNDTRACKS •

Super Atragon: Metal Pulse Music Edition	ADV			14.98	06/03
All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku Soundphase 4	ADV			14.98	06/03
Onimusha 2 Soundtrack	ADV			14.98	06/03
Slayers: The Motion Picture Soundtrack	ADV			14.98	07/01
Lost Universe: Movie Soundtrack	ADV			14.98	07/01
Nadesico The Movie: The Prince Of Darkness Soundtrack	ADV			14.98	07/01
Chobits Original Soundtrack 001	P	12	45	14.98	07/01
Hellsing Original Sounstrack #1: Raid	P	19	63	14.98	07/01
Serial Experiment Lain Original Soundtrack	P	14	53	14.98	07/01
Patlabor WXIII Original Soundtrack	P	17	45	14.98	07/01
Yoko Ishida: Sweets (Ai Yori Aoshi, Tiny Fairy Sugar, Pretear…)	P	11	51	14.98	07/01
Yuki Kajiura: Fiction (Noir, .Hack//SIGN, Aquarian Age…)	P	11	60	14.98	07/01
Haibane Renmei OST "Hanenone"	P	18	51	14.98	08/05
Heatguy J OST "Burn"	P	20	58	14.98	08/05
Mahoromatic OST	P	32	61	14.95	08/05
Giant Robo OST #1	ATX	19	46	14.98	08/26
Princess Nine OST #1	ATX	22	46	14.98	08/26
Hellsing OST #2: Ruins	P	16	57	14.98	09/02
Serial Experiment Lain Cyberia Mix	P		57	14.98	09/02
X TV Series OST #1	P	13	55	14.98	09/02
Sakura Wars The Movie OST	P	31	58	14.98	09/09
Giant Robo OST #2	ATX	15	44	14.98	09/30
Princess Nine OST #2	ATX	20	47	14.98	09/30
Ai Yori Aoshi: Sakura OST	P		47	14.98	10/07
Chobits OST 002	P		52	14.98	10/07

LEGEND:

Anime / Live-Action: A18: Anime 18 (CPM); ADV: A.D. Vision; AE: AnimEigo; AN: Anime Nation; APC: Asia Pulp Cinema; ATX: AnimeTrax (RS); AW: AnimeWorks (MB); B: Bandai; BV: Buena Vista (Disney); CM: Critical Mass (RS); CPM: Central Park Media; CTS: Columbia/TriStar; FN: Funimation; IG: Production I.G. Video; IM: Image; KM: Kitty Media (MB); KP: Kaiju Productions (MB); MB: Media Blasters; ME: Manga Ent.; P: Pioneer; RH: Rhino Home Video; RS: The Right Stuf; SC: SoftCel; SP: Synch-Point; SS: Software Scuptors (CPM); TP: Tokyo Pop; TS: Tokyo Shock (MB); USM: U.S. Manga Corps (CPM); UV: Urban Vision; VV: Viz Video; WB: Warner Brothers; S: Subtitled; D: Dubbed; B: Bilingual; M: Multilingual, E: English. DEL: Delayed. The last four columns are the duration (min.), price ($US), rating and release date (street).

Soundtrack: Chart lists releaser, number of tracks, duration (min.), price ($US) and release date.

Manga: AP: Antarctic Press; C1: ComicsOne; CPM: Central Park Media Manga; DH: Dark Horse; DK: Daikaiju; DW: Dreamwave; FB: Fanboy; GO: Guardian Of Order; GS: Gutsoon!; IC: Ironcat; IM: Image; M18: Manga 18 (CPM); MV: Marvel; RM: Redlight Manga; SF: Sexy Fruit (IC); T: Titan; TOY: Toypress; TP: Tokyopop (Mixx); VIZ: Viz Comics; W: Wizard; WS: WildStorm. GN: Graphic Novel. BK: Book. * Adult titles. Columns: Title, Issue, Publisher, Prices (in $US), Release Month. Sources: *Previews* and publishers' press releases.

.HACK//LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT BRACELET #1 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
@ LARGE	GN	TP	9.99	July
3X3 EYES: THE SHADOW OF THE KUNLUN	GN	DH	17.95	Aug. 13
ADVENTURE KID BOOK 3: MEGABITE *	GN	M18	16.95	Aug
ALIEN NINE	2	CPM	15.95	July
ANGEL NEST [Erika Sakurazawa]	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
ANGEL'S WING	2-3	FB	7.95	July/Aug
ANIME INSIDER (Formerly Anime Invasion)	9	W	4.99	Aug
ANIMERICA EXTRA VOL. 6 [manga anthology]	8-9	VIZ	4.95	July/Aug
ANIMERICA VOL. 11 [magazine]	8-9	VIZ	4.95	July/Aug
ASTRO BOY	18-19	DH	9.95	Aug. 27/Sep 24
BABY BIRTH (/2)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
BAKI THE GRAPPLER	1	GS	9.95	July
BASARA	1	VIZ	9.95	July
BASTARD!!	4	VIZ	12.95	Aug
BATTLE ROYALE #3 (/5)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL (#80): PETALS ON THE WIND	1	DH	2.99	July 9
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL (#81): SHADOWS	1	DH	2.99	Aug 13
BOYS OVER FLOWERS	1	VIZ	9.95	July
BRAIN POWERD #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
BRIGADOON #1 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
CANNON GOD EXAXXION	15-16	DH	3.50	July 2/Aug 13
CANNON GOD EXAXXION STAGE 2	GN	DH	14.95	Aug. 13
CARDCAPTOR SAKURA VOL. 6 (/6)	GN	TP	9.99	July
CASTLE IN THE SKY	1-4	VIZ	9.95	July/Aug
CHOBITS #7 (/8)	GN	TP	9.99	July
CHRONICLES OF THE CURSED SWORD #2 (/10)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
CITY HUNTER #2	GN	GS	9.95	Aug
CLAMP SCHOOL DETECTIVES #2-3 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July/Aug
CLUB 9	2	DH	15.95	Aug. 20
CONFIDENTIAL CONFESSIONS #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
CRAYON SHIN-CHAN #5	GN	C1	9.95	Aug
CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON #1-4 SET	GN	C1	49.00	Aug
DEMON DIARY #1 (/4)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
DI GI CHARAT #1: DEJIKO'S CHAMPION CUP THEATRE	GN	IC	10.95	Aug
DIGIMON #5 (/12)	GN	TP	9.99	July
DRAGON FIST #1: THE DRAGON RETURNS	GN	IC	14.95	Aug
DRAGON HUNTER #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
DRAGON KNIGHTS VOL. 9 (/17)	GN	TP	9.99	July
DRAGONBALL / DRAGONBALL Z	12	VIZ	7.95	July/Aug
DUKLYON: CLAMP SCHOOL DEFENDERS #1	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
ESCAFLOWNE #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
EXCEL SAGA	1-2	VIZ	9.95	July/Aug
FAKE #3 (/7)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
FIREFIGHTER!: DAIGO OF FIRE COMPANY M	4	VIZ	9.95	Aug
FIRST PRESIDENT OF JAPAN #2	GN	GS	9.95	Aug
FIST OF THE BLUE SKY #2	GN	GS	9.95	Aug
FIST OF THE NORTH STAR: THE MASTER EDITION	5	GS	17.95	July
FIVE STAR STORIES [SC, 9x12, 96pg, b&w]	14-15	TOY	9.98	July/Aug
FLAME OF RECCA	1	VIZ	9.95	July
FLCL #1 (/2)	gn	TP	9.99	Aug
FORBIDDEN DANCE #1 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
FUTURE WORLD	GN	DH	13.95	Sep 24
G-FAN [magazine]	64	DK	4.95	July
G-GUNDAM #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
GHOST IN THE SHELL 2: MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE	7	DH	3.50	Aug 6
GRAVITATION #2 (/12)	GN	TP	9.99	July
GTO Vol. 14 (/25)	GN	TP	9.99	July
GUNDAM WING: EPISODE ZERO	GN	VIZ	9.95	July
GUNDAM: THE ORIGIN	6	VIZ	7.95	July
GYO	1	VIZ	12.95	Aug
HANAUKYO MAID TEAM	1	IC	12.95	July
HAPPY MANIA #3 (/5)	GN	TP	9.99	July
HYPER DOLLS	5	IC	15.95	July
I LOVE YOU *	GN	SF	14.95	Aug
I.N.V.U. #3 (/4)	GN	TP	9.99	July
INITIAL D #7 (/23)	GN	TP	9.99	July
JING KING OF BANDITS #2 (/7)	GN	TP	9.99	July
KARE KANO VOL. 5 (/13)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
KINDAICHI CASE FILES (THE) #2 (/6)	GN	TP	9.99	July
KING OF HELL #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
KODOCHA #9 (/10)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
LEGENDARY COUPLE (THE) #5	GN	C1	13.95	Aug
LOVE HINA VOL. 13-14 (/14)	GN	TP	9.99	July/Aug
LUPIN III VOL. 6-7 (/14)	GN	TP	9.99	July/Aug
MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH #1 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
MARIONETTE GENERATION	4	VIZ	12.95	Aug
MARMALADE BOY #8 (/8)	GN	TP	9.99	July
MARS VOL. 13-14 (/15)	GN	TP	9.99	July/Aug
NARUTO	1	VIZ	7.95	July
NEWTYPE USA Vol. 2 [magazine]	8-9	ADV	9.95	July/Aug
NIE-A UNDER 7 #1 (/2)	GN	TP	9.99	July
No. 5	2	VIZ	15.95	July
NOZOMI	1	FB	5.95	July
OH MY GODDESS #100: DR. MOREAU	1 (/5)	DH	2.99	Aug 6
OH MY GODDESS #99: THE PHANTOM RACER	4 (/4)	DH	2.99	July 2
PEACH GIRL #4 (/7)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
PET SHOP OF HORRORS #2 (/10)	GN	TP	9.99	July
PROJECT ARMS	1	VIZ	9.95	July
PROTOCULTURE ADDICTS	78	P	4.95	Sep
RAIJIN COMICS [Weekly manga anthology! 214pg]	29-36	GS	4.95	July/Aug
RANMA 1/2	3-4, 23	VIZ	9.95	Aug
RAVE VOL. 4 (/18)	GN	TP	9.99	July
REBIRTH #4 (/11)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
REBOUND #3 (/10)	GN	TP	9.99	July
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: CHRONICLES OF THE HEROIC KNIGHT	5	CPM	15.95	July
RED PROWLING DEVIL #5	GN	C1	9.95	Aug
REN AI #1: IN THE SPOTLIGHT	GN	IC	12.95	Aug
SABER MARIONETTE J #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
SAMURAI DEEPER KYO #2 (/18)	GN	TP	9.99	July
SCRYED VOL. 4 (/5)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
SHAMAN KING	1	VIZ	7.95	Aug
SHAOLIN SISTERS VOL. 4 (/5)	GN	TP	9.99	July
SHAOLIN SOCCER	1	C1	13.95	Aug
SHONEN JUMP VOL. 1 ! [manga anthology, 352pg!]	9-10	VIZ	4.95	July/Aug
SHORT CUTS	2	VIZ	9.95	Aug
SHUTTER BOX #1 (/2)	GN	TP	9.99	July
SILENT MOBIUS	11	VIZ	12.95	July
SLAM DUNK #2	GN	GS	9.95	Aug
SLAYERS SPECIAL #3: LESSER OF TWO EVILS	GN	CPM	15.95	Aug
STORM RIDERS COLLECTED ILLUSTRATIONS BOOK 3	BK	C1	29.99	July
STORY OF THE TAO #5	GN	C1	13.95	Aug
SUPER MANGA BLAST! [manga anthology]	34-35	DH	5.99	July 30/Aug 27
TENCHI MUYO!, THE ALL-NEW VOL. 2: DOOM TIME	GN	VIZ	8.95	July
THE SKULL MAN #7 (/7)	GN	TP	9.99	July
TOKYO MEW MEW #3 (/4)	GN	TP	9.99	July
TUXEDO GIN	1	VIZ	9.95	July
ULTRAMAN TIGA	1 (/10)	DH	3.99	Aug 27
UNDER THE GLASS MOON #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
UROTSUKIDOJI BK 5: GATE OF HELL	GN	M18	16.95	July
VAMPIRE GAME #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	July
VAMPIRE PRINCESS YUI	5	IC	15.95	July
WEDDING PEACH	1	VIZ	9.95	July
WHAT'S MICHAEL? SHOW TIME	GN	DH	8.95	Sep 17
WILD ACT #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug
WORLD OF HARTZ	GN	TP	9.99	July
X-DAY #1 (/2)	GN	TP	9.99	July
YOU & ME	6-7	IC	11.95	July/Aug
YU-GI-OH!	2	VIZ	7.95	Aug
ZODIAC P.I. #2 (/3)	GN	TP	9.99	Aug

• MANGA SELECTION •

.hack/LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT Vol. 1 (of 3). The exciting story of two 14-year-old twins who enter and win a contest to portray legendary avatars in an ultra-advanced online game called "The World." What starts as a game turns out to be a quest to save the world! Tokyopop, Written by Tatsuya Hamazaki with art by Rei Izumi, sc, 5x7, 192 pg, b&w, $9.99 US, avail. on September 9.

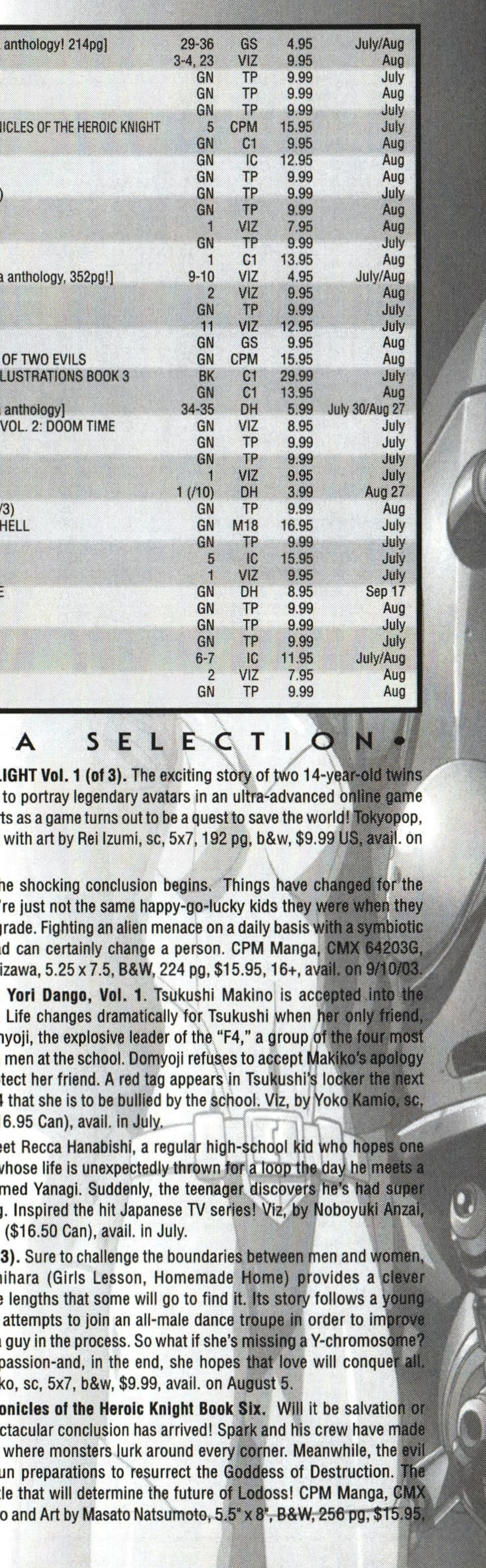
Alien Nine: Book Three. The shocking conclusion begins. Things have changed for the girls in the Alien Party. They're just not the same happy-go-lucky kids they were when they started out back in the sixth grade. Fighting an alien menace on a daily basis with a symbiotic helmet attached to your head can certainly change a person. CPM Manga, CMX 64203G, Story and art by Hitoshi Tomizawa, 5.25 x 7.5, B&W, 224 pg, $15.95, 16+, avail. on 9/10/03.

Boys Over Flowers / Hana Yori Dango, Vol. 1. Tsukushi Makino is accepted into the prestigious Eitoku academy. Life changes dramatically for Tsukushi when her only friend, Makiko falls on Tsukasa Domyoji, the explosive leader of the "F4," a group of the four most handsome and richest young men at the school. Domyoji refuses to accept Makiko's apology and Tsukushi steps in to protect her friend. A red tag appears in Tsukushi's locker the next morning—a sign from the F4 that she is to be bullied by the school. Viz, by Yoko Kamio, sc, 216 pg, b&w, $9.95 U.S. ($16.95 Can), avail. in July.

Flame Of Recca, Vol. 1. Meet Recca Hanabishi, a regular high-school kid who hopes one day to become a ninja, and whose life is unexpectedly thrown for a loop the day he meets a cute and mysterious girl named Yanagi. Suddenly, the teenager discovers he's had super ninja secret powers all along. Inspired the hit Japanese TV series! Viz, by Noboyuki Anzai, sc, 192 pg, b&w, $9.95 U.S. ($16.50 Can), avail. in July.

Forbidden Dance Vol. 1 (of 3). Sure to challenge the boundaries between men and women, this manga by Hinako Ashihara (Girls Lesson, Homemade Home) provides a clever commentary on love and the lengths that some will go to find it. Its story follows a young aspiring female dancer who attempts to join an all-male dance troupe in order to improve her skill and hopefully snag a guy in the process. So what if she's missing a Y-chromosome? She's got spunk, skill, and passion-and, in the end, she hopes that love will conquer all. Tokyopop, by Ashihara Hinako, sc, 5x7, b&w, $9.99, avail. on August 5.

Record of Lodoss War: Chronicles of the Heroic Knight Book Six. Will it be salvation or annihilation? Finally, the spectacular conclusion has arrived! Spark and his crew have made it to the dark isle of Marmo, where monsters lurk around every corner. Meanwhile, the evil sorcerer, Vagnado, has begun preparations to resurrect the Goddess of Destruction. The stage is set for the final battle that will determine the future of Lodoss! CPM Manga, CMX 64306G, Story by Ryo Mizuno and Art by Masato Natsumoto, 5.5" x 8", B&W, 256 pg, $15.95, 13+, avail. on 9/03/03.



ANIME RELEASES (DVD)

Continues from page 6

BRIGADOON #2: FRIENDS AND ENEMIES	TP	B	100	29.99	13+	07/15
GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA (GTO) #9: FIELD TRIPS (Eps 36-39)	TP	B	100	29.99	16+	07/15
FULL METAL PANIC! #2: MISSION 02	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	07/15
KING OF BANDIT JING #1	ADV	B	100	29.98	13+	07/22
KING OF BANDIT JING #1 W/ BOX	ADV	B	100	39.98	13+	07/22
SAIYUKI #3: CONFRONTING THEIR DEMONS	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	07/22
SUPER DUPER SUMOS #5: SUME SQUEEZO	ADV	D	95	12.98	G	07/22
YUGIHO #11: BEST OF FRIENDS, BEST OF DUELISTS (Edited)	FN	D	60	19.95	G	07/22
FLCL #3	IG/SP	B	60	29.95	13+	07/22
X #6: SIX	P	B	75	29.98	16+	07/22
FLCL #3 W/ BOX	SP	B	60	34.95		07/22
CITY HUNTER SEASON ONE: COLLECTION #1 (26 eps)	ADV	S	650	89.98	15+	07/29
CITY HUNTER SEASON ONE: COLLECTION #2 (25 eps)	ADV	S	625	89.98	15+	07/29
RAHXEPHON #4: DISSONANCE	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	07/29
RUNE SOLDIER #3: A TRUE CHAMPION	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	07/29
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST THE MOVIE	ADV	B	90	29.98	15+	07/29
GENMA WARS #3: TRIBAL SKIRMISH	AW		75	24.95		07/29
SPACE PIRATE MITO #4: LIKE MOTHER, LIKE SON	AW		75	24.95		07/29
TWELVE KINGDOMS #1: SHADOW OF THE MOON...	AW	B	125	29.95		07/29
WEATHERING CONTINENT	AW		125	29.95	13+	07/29
DBZ: MAJIN BUU BOX SET	FN		420+	99.95	13+	07/29
MOONLIGHT LADY #1	KM		60	29.95	18+	07/29
FIST OF THE NORTH STAR #3-4	ME	B	120 ea	24.95 ea	13+	07/29
HEAT GUY J #1: SUPER ANDROID	P	B	100	29.98	13+	07/29
HEAT GUY J #1: SUPER ANDROID W/ LIMITED ED. BOX	P	B	100	39.98	13+	07/29
LUPIN III THE MOVIE: SECRET OF MAMO	P	B	100	29.98		07/29
A WIND NAMED AMNESIA (ANIME 101 ED.)	USM	B	80	19.99	13+	07/29
DETONATOR ORGUN (ANIME 101 ED.)	USM	B	80	19.99	13+	07/29
DOMINION TANK POLICE (ANIME 101 ED.)	USM	B	160	19.99	13+	07/29
GUARDIAN OF DARKNESS (ANIME 101 ED.)	USM	B	130	19.99	13+	07/29
VIRGIN FLEET (ANIME 101 ED.)	USM	B	90	19.99	13+	07/29
WRATH OF THE NINJA (ANIME 101 ED.)	USM	B	87	19.99	16+	07/29
DEVIL LADY (THE) #6: THE VICTORIOUS	ADV	B	100	29.98	17+	08/05
NOIR #5: TERMINAL VELOCITY	ADV	B	75	29.98	15+	08/05
ANDROID KIKAIDER: THE ANIMATION #1: LONELY SOUL	B	B	100	29.98	13+	08/05
ARGENTO SOMA #4: OUTSIDE SANITY	B	B	100	29.98	13+	08/05
URUSEI YATSURA BOX SET #4 (Vol. l6-20)	AE	S				08/05
JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE #2	STA	B	60	24.95		08/10
DEMON BEAST RESURRECTION: PURGATORY	A18	B	60	29.99	18+	08/12
NIGHTMARE CAMPUS #4	A18	B	40	29.99	18+	08/12
STEEL ANGEL KURUMI 2 #1: THE LIPS OF A NEW MASTER	ADV	B	90	24.98	17+	08/12
A LITTLE SNOW FAIRY SUGAR #3: THE BEAR PIANIST	P	B	100	29.98	3+	08/12
BEYBLADE #4	P	D	125	19.98	7+	08/12
MASTER KEATON #2: EXCAVATION II	P	B	110	29.98	13+	08/12
DRAGON KNIGHT: WHEEL OF TIME #2	SC		65	29.98	18+	08/12
ELVEN BRIDE	SC		50	29.98	18+	08/12
MACHINE ROBO: REVENGE OF CHRONOS #2	SS	S	125	19.99	3+	08/12
REIGN, THE CONQUEROR #4: DESTRUCTION (Eps 11-13)	TP	B	100	29.99	16+	08/12
DNA2 (DNA SQUARED) #4: CROSSFIRE (Eps 10-12)	USM	B	75	29.99	13+	08/12
HADES PROJECT ZEORYMER #2: EXTINCTION	USM	B	60	19.99	13+	08/12
PATLABOR TV SERIES #6	USM	B	100	29.99	3+	08/12
SPIRIT WARRIOR: REVIVAL OF EVIL	USM	B	49	19.99	16+	08/12
INU-YASHA #8: KIKYO'S WANDERING SOUL	VV	B	78	24.98		08/12
PROJECT ARMS #6: WON'T YOU JOIN THE DANCE?	VV	B	78	24.98		08/12
NAJICA BLITZ TACTICS #1	ADV	B	100	29.98	17+	08/19
NAJICA BLITZ TACTICS #1 W/ COLL. BOX & PANTIES	ADV	B	100	44.98	17+	08/19
NEO RANGA #4: A NATION APART	ADV	B	120	29.98	15+	08/19
SAKURA WARS TV #3: CRESCENDO	ADV	B	100	29.98	12+	08/19
BANNER OF THE STARTS II #1: HUNTERS	B	B	100	29.98	13+	08/19
JUNKERS COME HERE	B	B	105	29.98	7+	08/19
SABER MARIONETTE J ULTIMATE COLLECTION	B	B	1605	199.98	13+	08/19
DRAGONBALL: PICCOLO JR SAGA PT 2 (Eps 138-153)	FN	B	300+	39.95	13+	08/19
YUGIHO #12: MATCH OF THE MILLENIUM (Edited)	FN	D	60	19.95	G	08/19
YUYU HAKUSHO #12: THE RISING STORM (Edited)	FN	B	62	19.95	G	08/19
AI YORI AOSHI #4: TRULY YOURS	P	B	125	29.98	13+	08/19
AKIKO	SC		60	29.98	18+	08/19
RANMA 1/2 FOREVER #8: SOMEDAY, SOMEHOW	VV	B	78	24.98	13+	08/19
AURA BATTLER DUNBINE #2: HEROES OF BYSTON WELL	ADV	B	100	29.98	12+	08/26
EDEN BOWY #3: NOWHERE TO RUN	ADV	B	100	29.98	12+	08/26
GO NAGAI DVD SET	ADV		325	44.98		DEL
HELLO KITTY'S PARADISE COLLECTION #2	ADV	D	180	39.98	G	08/26
MAZINKAISER #1: TURBO SMASHING SENSATION	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	08/26
THOSE WHO HUNT ELVES II #1	ADV	B	150	29.98	15+	08/26
ZOE: DOLORES, I #6: LAST THINGS LAST!	ADV	B	100	29.98	15+	08/26
EX-DRIVER COMPLETE COLLECTION	AW	B	180	49.95		08/26
GOKUDO COLLECTION EXTRAORDINAIRE	AW	B	650	149.95		08/26
GUN FRONTIER #3: NOOSES WILD	AW		100	29.95		08/26
MIRAGE OF BLAZE #2: ANCIENT RIVALS	AW	B	100	24.95		08/26
SAMURAI DEEPER KYO #2: CURSE OF THE TOKUGAWA	AW	B	125	29.95		08/26
VANILLA SERIES (THE): SLAVE SISTERS	CM	B	60	24.95	18+	08/26
DBZ: BROLY: THE LEGENDARY SUPER SAIYAN (Edited)	FN			19.95	G	08/26
DBZ: BROLY: THE LEGENDARY SUPER SAIYAN (Uncut)	FN			24.95	13+	08/26
DARLING	KM		60	29.95	18+	08/26
DARK MYTH	ME	B	90	24.95		08/26
NEW DOMINION TANK POLICE	ME	B	180	24.95		08/26
BEYBLADE #4: TOPSY TURVY	P	D	125	19.98	7+	08/26
HAIBANE RENMEI #1: NEW FEATHER	P	B	100	29.98	13+	08/26
HAIBANE RENMEI #1: NEW FEATHER W/ BOX	P	B	100	34.98	13+	08/26
MAHOROMATIC: SOMETHING MORE BEAUTIFUL #1	P	B	100	29.98	16+	08/26
KO BEAST #2: V-DARN STRIKES BACK!	RS	B	60	24.95	13+	08/26
COUNTDOWN: THE AKIRA SAGA	SC		75	29.98	18+	08/26
TOURNEMENT OF THE GODS: TITLE MATCH	SC		75	29.98	18+	08/26
INU-YASHA #9: ORIGIN OF THE SACRED JEWEL	VV	B	78	24.98		08/26
URUSEI YATSURA BOX SET #5 (Vol. 21-25)	AE	S				08/29
I'M GONNA BE AN ANGEL #2	SP					AUG
MEDABOTS #11: TO THE TOURNAMENT (Eps 44-47)	ADV	D	100	14.98	G	09/02
.HACK//SIGN #4: OMNIPOTENCE (Limited Edition)	B	B	100	39.98	13+	09/02
LOVE HINA AGAIN THE MOVIE	B	B	93	29.98	16+	09/02
ONEGAI TEACHER #3: THE HONEYMOON'S OVER	B	B	75	29.98	16+	09/02
s.CRY.ed #2: THE ALTER HUNT (Eps 6-10)	B	B	125	29.98	13+	09/02
NINJA SCROLL TV SERIES #1	UV	B	90	24.95		09/02
NIGHT SHIFT NURSES: RN'S REVENGE XTREME SERIES	A18	B	60	29.99	18+	09/09
CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #17: CONFESSIONS	P	S	100	29.98	13+	09/09
CHOBITS #4: LOVE DEFINED	P	B	100	29.98	16+	09/09
SAKURA WARS MOVIE	P	B	85	29.98	13+	09/09
SAKURA WARS MOVIE (Limited Edition)	P	B	85	39.98	13+	09/09
CAT SOUP COLLECTOR'S SERIES	SS		34	19.99	16+	09/09
CAT SOUP COLLECTOR'S SERIES LIMITED EDITION	SS		34	24.99	16+	09/09
REV. GIRL UTENA #8: UNVEILING	SS	B	75	29.99	13+	09/09
ANIMATION RUNNER KUROMI COLLECTOR'S SERIES	USM	B	40	24.99	16+	09/09
BOYS OVER FLOWERS #1: DECLARATION OF WAR!	VV	B	104	24.98		09/09
URUSEI YATSURA MOVIE 1: ONLY YOU	AE	B				09/12
.HACK//SIGN #4: OMNIPOTENCE	B	B	100	29.98	13+	09/16
GENESHAFT #3: ORBIT	B	B	75	29.98	13+	09/16
SPIRIT OF WONDER THE MOVIE	B	B	97	29.98	16+	09/16
THE BIG O COLLECTOR'S EDITION (Eps 1-13)	B	B	325	44.98	13+	09/16
DBZ: FUSION BOX SET (Uncut)	FN			99.95	13+	09/16
YUGIHO #13: MATCH OF THE MILLENIUM PT 2 (Edited)	FN	D	60	19.95	G	09/16
BRIGADOON #3: THE CELESTIAL WORLD	TP	B	100	29.99	13+	09/16
GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA (GTO) #10	TP	B	100	29.99	16+	09/16
INITIAL D #1	TP	D	100	19.98		09/16
CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND COLL. ED. #1: REINCARNATION	VV	B	300	49.98		09/16
RANMA 1/2 RANDOM RHAPSODY (SEASON 6) BOX SET	VV	B	600	119.98		09/16
DRAGON BALL: GENERAL BLUE BOX SET (Uncut)	FN			39.95	13+	09/23
X #7: SEVEN	P	B	75	29.98	16+	09/23
CORRECTOR YUI #2: WEB OF CONFUSION	VV	B	125	24.98		09/23
ARCADIA OF MY YOUTH	AE					09/26
COSMOS WARRIOR ZERO BOX SET	AW		325	39.95		09/26
FIGURE 17 #1	AW		150	29.95		09/26
GENMA WARS #4: SKULL CITY	AW		75	24.95		09/30
TWELVE KINGDOMS #2: EMPRESS	AW	B	125	29.95		09/30
ZENKI #4	AW		325	39.95		09/30
VANILLA SERIES (THE): ENDLESS SERENADE	CM	B	30	14.95	18+	09/30
MOONLIGHT LADY #2	KM		60	29.95	18+	07/29
MACROSS PLUS DVD BOX SET	ME			89.95		09/30
NINJA SCROLL (10TH ANNIVERSARY)	ME	B	90	34.95		09/30
ORGUSS 02	ME	S	160	24.95		09/30
HIS AND HER CIRCUMST. #5: ALTERATIONS AND NEW PERS...	RS	B	150	29.95	13+	09/30
HIS AND HER CIRCUMSTANCES BOX SET	RS	B	780	129.95	13+	09/30
ANDROID KIKAIDER: THE ANIMATION #2	B	B	100	29.98	13+	10/07
ARGENTO SOMA #5: OUR MEMORIES	B	B	100	29.98	13+	10/07
WITCH HUNTER ROBIN #1 (Limited Edition)	B	B	125	29.98		10/07
KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD OVAs & MOVIE BOX SET	AE					10/10
JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE #3	STA	B	60	24.95		10/10
AI YORI AOSHI #5: WITH ALL MY HEART	P	B	100	29.98	13+	10/14
BEYBLADE #5	P	D	100	19.98	7+	10/14
HEAT GUY J #2: VAMPIRE'S AMBITION	P	B	100	29.98	13+	10/14
LITTLE SNOW FAIRY SUGAR #4: MAGICAL SPARKLING DAYS	P	B	100	29.98	3+	10/14
LUPIN III #4: THIEVES' PARADISE	P	B	125	24.98		10/14
MASTER KEATON #3: KILLER CONSCIENCE	P	B	125	29.98	13+	10/14
REV. GIRL UTENA #9: REVELATION	SS	B	100	29.99	13+	10/14
INITIAL D #2	TP	B	100	19.99		10/14
DNA2 (DNA SQUARED) #5: EPIPHANY (Eps 13-15)	USM	B	75	29.99	13+	10/14
DNA2 (DNA SQUARED) COLLECTION	USM	B	375	119.99	13+	10/14
LEGEND OF THE DRAGON KINGS #3: RED DRAGON	USM	B	92	19.99	13+	10/14
PATLABOR TV SERIES COLLECTION	USM	B	210	49.99	13+	10/14
TIME STRANGER	USM	B	90	19.99	13+	10/14
INFINITE RYVIUS #1: LOST IN SPACE (Limited Edition)	B	B	125	49.98	13+	10/21
WITCH HUNTER ROBIN #1	B	B	125	29.98		10/21
MADOX-01	AE					10/24
EVANGELION MOVIES BOX SET	ME			49.95		10/28
FIST OF THE NORTH STAR #5	ME	B	120+	24.95 ea	13+	10/28
HAIBANE RENMEI #2: WINGS OF SORROW	P	B	75	29.98	13+	10/28
MAHOROMATIC: SOMETHING MORE BEAUTIFUL #2	P	B	100	29.98	16+	10/28
MAO-CHAN #1: I WILL PROTECT THE PEACE OF JAPAN	P	B	89	29.98	3+	10/28
STAR BLAZERS: THE BOLAR WARS #6	VE		120			11/04
CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #18: REVELATIONS	P	S	75	19.98	13+	11/11
CHOBITS #5: DISAPPEARANCE	P	B	100	29.98	16+	11/11
SOMEDAY'S DREAMERS #1 (Limited Edition)	P	B	75	39.98	13+	11/11
SOMEDAY'S DREAMERS #1	P	B	75	29.98	13+	11/11
REV. GIRL UTENA #10: FINALE	SS	B	100	29.99	13+	11/11
REV. GIRL UTENA APOCALYPSE SAGA BOX SET (#7-10)	SS	B	400		13+	11/11
BRIGADOON #4: HOPE AMID CHAOS	TP	B	100	29.99	13+	11/11

North American News, Acquisitions & New Releases mostly compiled and reported by Claude J. Pelletier. ANN = www.animenewsnetwork.com.

12 kokuki (The Twelve Kingdoms): Kaze no Banri: Reimei no Sora Vol. 1	PCBP-50774	4,800	18-Jun
Doraemon Collection Special Natsu no 1	PCBE-50543	3,200	18-Jun
Doraemon Collection Special Natsu no 2	PCBE-50544	3,200	18-Jun
Gatchaman II DVD-Box 1 [Regular Edition]	XT-1425	23,500	18-Jun
Kino no Tabi: The Beautiful World Vol.1	PCBG-50408	5,800	18-Jun
Majusensen (Demon Beast Phalanx) Vol. 1	PAND-5008	3,800	21-Jun
Ginga Reppuu Baxinger Vol. 1	ZMBZ-1325	4,700	25-Jun
Gunparade March: Aratanaru Kougunka 2	PIBA-7192	5,000	25-Jun
Mousou Kagaku Series Wandaba style Vol. 1 [limited edition]	ZMBZ-1570	7,500	25-Jun
Tenchi Muyo! no Uchiiwai: towa Iumonono, Itsu ni Narunda OVA	VPBY-11764	1,900	25-Jun
Transformers: The Micron Legend	COBC-4239	3,980	25-Jun
Weiss kreuz Gluhen Flame VI	MMBV-1011	5,800	25-Jun
Kiddy Grade Case 5 Collector's Edition [limited release]	KABD-535	7,800	26-Jun
.hack// Tasogare no Udewa Densetsu Vol. 3	BCBA-1564	5,800	27-Jun
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 07	**BCBA-1397**	**6,000**	**27-Jun**
Happy Lesson Character DVD 5 (Satsuki Gokajo & Kaoru Sasajima)	KSXA-24455	3,000	27-Jun
Happy World! 3	KSXA-24433	5,000	27-Jun
Heatguy J Vol. 5	BCBA-1466	5,000	27-Jun
Lime-iro Senkitan 3 [Director's Cut]	KSXA-24503	5,000	27-Jun
Mobile Suit Gundam Seed 4	**BCBA-1574**	**6,000**	**27-Jun**
Overman King Gainer Vol. 7	**BCBA-1317**	**6,000**	**27-Jun**
Saint Seiya The Hades Chapter: Sanctuary 6	BCBA-1526	7,800	27-Jun
Stratos 4 Vol. 4	BCBA-1448	6,000	27-Jun
Witch Hunter Robin VIII	**BCBA-1345**	**5,000**	**27-Jun**
Wolf's Rain Vol. 2	**BCBA-1602**	**6,000**	**27-Jun**
Uchu no Stellvia (Stellvia in Space) Foundation I	KIBA-901	5,800	02-Jul
Neko no Ongaeshi (The Cat Returns)	**VWDZ-8046**	**4,700**	**04-Jul**
Mahoromatic: Motto Utsukushii Mono Vol. 7	PIBA-1367	5,000	10-Jul
Mahou Tsukai ni Taisetsu na koto 5	PIBA-7185	5,000	10-Jul
12kokuki (The Twelve Kingdoms): Kaze no Banri: Reimei no Sora Vol. 2	PCBP-50775	4,800	16-Jul
Kino no Tabi: The Beautiful World Vol. 2	PCBG-50409	4,800	16-Jul
Slam Dunk DVD-Box [limited release]	DSTD-2220	88,000	21-Jul
Astroboy Best Selection 2 [Zoku Robot-hen]	COBC-90288	1,980	23-Jul
Astroboy Best Selection 2 [VS-hen]	COBC-90289	1,980	23-Jul
Astroboy Best Selection 2 [Meisaku-hen]	COBC-90290	1,980	23-Jul
Astroboy DVD-Box 6	XT-1430	28,200	23-Jul
Hokuto no Ken (Fist of the North Star) Vol. 7	POBE-5017	3,800	23-Jul
Maya Maxx "Kuu"	COBM-5234	3,800	23-Jul
Sonic X Vol. 1	POBE-5601	4,800	23-Jul
Air Master Vol. 1	VPBY-11771	4,800	24-Jul
Berserk # 4	VPBY-11728	4,800	24-Jul
D.N.Angel peach Target 1 [limited release]	BBBA-3641	5,000	24-Jul
D.N.Angel sky Target 1 [limited release]	BBBA-3661	6,200	24-Jul
Galaxy Express 999 Compl. DVD-Box 6 "Mugen e no Tabidachi" [limited release]	AVBA-14741	24,800	24-Jul
Kiddy Grade Case 6 Collector's Edition	KABD-536	7,800	24-Jul
Nanaka 6/17 Vol. 2	KIBA-882	6,000	24-Jul
Parasite Dolls #3	BBBA-3573	4,800	24-Jul
Shin Hokuto no Ken episode 1 "Jubaku no Machi"	BBBA-3681	6,800	24-Jul
Triangle Heart Sweet Songs Forever #1	KIBA-911	5,800	24-Jul
Yoroiden Samurai Troopers DVD-Box [limited release]	SVZB-7037	20,000	24-Jul
.hack// Tasogare no Udewa Densetsu Vol. 4	BCBA-1565	5,800	25-Jul
Di Gi Charat Nyo Limited Special 1 [limited release]	BCBA-1657	8,800	25-Jul
Gadguard Vol. 1	ZMBZ-1581	5,800	25-Jul
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 08	**BCBA-1398**	**6,000**	**25-Jul**
Lime-iro Senkitan 4 [Director's Cut]	KSXA-24504	5,000	25-Jul
Majusensen The Apocalypse Vol. 2 [Limited Edition]	PAND-5009S	6,200	25-Jul
Marumie Mix Juice Vol. 1	FCBV-1	5,500	25-Jul
Matantei Loki Ragnarok Vol. 1	ASHB-1223	3,000	25-Jul
Mobile Suit Gundam Seed 5	**BCBA-1575**	**6,000**	**25-Jul**
Saint Seiya The HADES Chapter - Sanctuary 7	BCBA-1527	7,800	25-Jul
Tenshi no Shippo Chu! (Angel's Tail Chu!) 3	ASHB-1158	5,600	25-Jul
Texhnolyze Unite 01	PIBA-1431	2,000	25-Jul
Witch Hunter Robin IX	**BCBA-1346**	**5,000**	**25-Jul**
Wolf's Rain Vol. 3	**BCBA-1603**	**6,000**	**25-Jul**
Transformers: The Micron Legend #4	COBC-4240	3,980	30-Jul
Dear Boys Vol. 1	**ZWBD-98031**	**3,200**	**06-Aug**
Kikou sennyo Rouran Vol. 1	KIBA-915	6,000	06-Aug
King Of Bandit Jing DVD-Box [limited release]	**SVZB-1501**	**18,000**	**06-Aug**
One Piece Fourth Season Arabasta Gekito Hen Piece 1	AVBA-14766	3,800	06-Aug
Mahou Tsukai ni Taisetsu na koto 6	PIBA-7186	5,000	08-Aug
Ocean Waves (Umi ga Kikoeru, aka I Can Hear the Sea)	**VWDZ-8026**	**4,700**	**08-Aug**
Inuyasha: Kagami no Naka no Mugenjo (Theatrical Feature)	SDV-2727D	6,000	21-Aug
Tenshi na Konamaiki 13 [untrimmed, widescreen edition]	SDV-2708D	6,000	21-Aug
Galaxy Angel AA 1-3 Gentei Special Pack [limited release]	BCBA-1967	21,200	22-Aug
Rahxephon Tagen Hensoukyoku [limited release]	ZMBZ-1594	8,800	23-Aug
Scrapped Princess I SutePRIX Tabidachi no Sho [limited release]	GSTP-29091	7,800	25-Aug
Cyborg 009: Conclusion God's War: Josho	AVBA-14769	5,800	27-Aug
Nurse Witch Komugi-chan: Magical te Karte 3 [limited edition]	PIBA-7198	5,800	10-Sep
Dragon Ball Z DVD Box "Dragon Box" Vol. 2	PCBC-50369	105,000	18-Sep
Machine Robo Bucchigiri Battle Hackers	PIBA-1457	28,000	26-Sep
Uchu no Stellvia (Stellvia in Space) Primier I DVD Box	KIBA-9901	25,800	01-Oct
Inazuman Vol. 1	DSTD-6491	13,800	21-Oct
Kamen Rider (Masked Rider) Stronger Vol. 1	DSTD-6481	12,000	21-Oct
The Good Little Witch Returns (Maho Shojo Chukana Ipanema !) Vol. 1	DSTD-6501	13,800	21-Oct
Lupin III (Theatrical) DVD Limited Box [limited release]	TDV-2735D	13,800	24-Oct

Japanese DVD Releases: This list is not exhaustive. The DVD listed are in Japanese language only and for Region 2. It shows: title, catalog number, price (¥) and release date. Sources: www.cdjapan.co.jp.

• NORTH AMERICA • NORTH AMERICA •

Anime Acquisitions – ADV Films: *All Purpose Cat Nuku Nuku, Aquarian Age, Azumanga Daioh Movie, Bast Of Lemon, Birth, DNAngel, Gravion, Gun Crazy, Happy Lesson, Kino's Journey, Mahou Yuugi, Mani Mani (NeoTokyo), Megazone 23 Part 1-3, Nurse Witch Komugi-chan, Panyo Panyo DiGi Charat, Rahxephon Movie, Sister Princess, Slayers Premium, Wedding Peach*; **Bandai**: *.Hack//Legend Of The Twilight Bracelet, Dragon Drive, Galaxy Angel 1 & 2, Gundam F91, Love Hina Again, Stand Alone Complex, Stratos 4, Taruto (Magical Meow Meow), Tenshi no Shippo, Wolf's Rain, Yukikaze, Zeta Gundam*; **CPM**: *Narue no Sekai* (World Of Narue); **FUNimation**: *Detective Conan, Kiddy Grade, Tenshi Muyo GXP*; **Media Blasters**: *Boku no Sexual Harassment, Gunparade March*; **Pioneer**: *Earth Defender Mao-chan, Gungrave, Last Exile, Read Or Die TV, Samurai Champloo, Texhnolyze*; **Viz**: *Flame Of Recca, Hana Yori Dango, Hikaro no Go.* Also **4-Kids** has announced the acquisition of *Shaman King* (to air on Fox Box); **AN Entertainment** is rumored to have *Miami Guns* and *Jungle wa Itsumo Hale Nochi Guu*; **DiC** acquired *Saint Seiya* (to air on Cartoon Network and be released on video by ADV); Hiramaki International (the company behind the new magazine Anime Play) acquired *Idol Fighter Su-Chi-Pai* and *Soar High! Isami.*

Anime Web Directory: **Anime Play Magazine**: animeplay-mag.com, **Cowboy Bebop**: www.sonypictures.com/cthe/cowboybebop/, **Full Metal Panic**: www.full-metal-panic.com, **Geneshaft**: geneshaft.bandai-ent.com, **Junkers Come Here**: junkerscomehere.com, **Kiddy Grade**: www.kiddygrade.tv, **Ninja Scroll**: ninja-scroll.com, **Sakura Wars**: www.funimation.com/sakura.htm, **Scryed**: www.scryedanime.com, **Tenchi Muyo GXP**: www.tenchimuyogxp.com, **Voice Of A Distant Star**: www.advfilms.com/favorites/voices/.

FanTasia International Film Festival, dedicated to culturally diverse & innovative genre films, will be held from July 17 to August 10 2003, in Montreal (Quebec, Canada), at the Concordia Hall Theatre and De-Sève Theatre (1455 de Maisonneuve West, Metro Guy). This year anime program includes *Cowboy Bebop The Movie*, *FLCL*, *Goldorak*, *Parasite Dolls*, *Sakura Wars The Movie*, *Tamala 2010: A Punk Cat In Space* and *Voices Of A Distant Star*. There will be plenty of movies from Japan (27 including 7 anime, 6 shorts, 4 Takashi Miike, 2 *Godzilla* and 2 *Ultraman*), Hong-Kong (16 including 4 restored Shaw brothers' classics), Korea (11) and other Asian countries (3 from Thailand and 1 from Taiwan). That's about 60 Asian movies among the 90 features & 40 shorts that will be screened by the festival over 25 days! See ad on pg 35 or check www.fantasiafestival.com for details!

Manga Acquisitions – ComicsOne: *Please Teacher* novel; **Dark Horse**: *Berserk, Hellsing, The Ring, Trigun*; **Tokyopop**: *.Hack//DUSK, A.I. Love You, B'Tx, Cyborg 009, FLCL, Fruits Basket, Get Backers, Mahoromatic, Pita Ten, Psychic Academy*; **Viz**: *Hana Yori Dango, Hikaru no Go.*

Short News: **.hack//ENEMY** is a Trading Card Game based on *.hack* to be released in October by Decipher. • **4-Kids** & FUNimation will release the first four volumes of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* videos (VHS) in Spanish on August 12. • **ADV** creates two more branches to release Manga and Toys. • **AN Entertainment** has made the first episode of *Risky Safety* available for free download on their web page (riskysafety.com). • ***AnimePlay*** is a new bi-monthly magazine featuring an interactive DVD (including upcoming anime titles, news of new items available, special features such as interviews, classes, and other interesting topics); available from Barnes & Noble, Sam Goody and Suncoast (animeplay-mag.com). • **Fanboy Entertainment**, now backed by Plex International Design, is back with two manga titles: *Angel's Wing* by Tetsuya Aoki and *Nozomi* by Nao Yazawa. • **Fox Box Fall line-up** will include *Kinnikuman*, *Sonic X*, *Kirby*, *TMNT* and *Shaman King*. • ***Initial D* Trading Card Game** by AEG will be released in October (Starter Decks: $12.99, Booster Packs: $3.29). • ***Japanese In Mangaland*** by Marc Bernabe is a book teaching the basics of the Japanese language using manga as didactic tool (236 pg, $24 US). • The next **Miyazaki** movie to be released by Disney will be *Porco Rosso*! • ***Neon Genesis Evangelion*** LIVE ACTION movie will be produced in collaboration with ADV Films, Gainax and Weta Workshop (who did the special effects for the *Lord Of The Rings* movies)!! It will be a retelling of the story with a $100 million budget! • ***Raijin*** the manga anthology published by Gutsoon! is going monthly in September. • **Viz** has discontinued all its monthly comics format to concentrate on graphic novels. (Sources: ANN & various press releases).

CHAPTER TWO: EMPRESS
THE TWELVE KINGDOMS
SHADOW OF THE MOON, THE SEA OF SHADOW

.HACK//SIGN

Bandai, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 7/15/03 & 9/16/03. **#3: Gestalt**. Mimiru, Bear, and Tsukasa participate in a sponsored event and seem to have a good time at it. However, in the real world, a doctor and a parent discuss the fate of a child in a coma. But who is it? With some help from the mysterious and powerful hacker named Helba, Crim and B.T. manage to discover the secret portal called the Twilight Eye. They are transported to a hidden realm where the search for the secret Key of the Twilight that may hold the fate of Tsukasa within it, but will these answers be worth the ultimate price? **#4: Omnipotence**. After the battle at the upside-down castle, everyone but Tsukasa is returned to a regular field in "The World". Did Tsukasa die? What happened to him? Captured by a previously friendly unseen force, Tsukasa reappears with parts of his memories, thoughts, and feelings "missing". Is this really Tsukasa or just a copy of the character's data? The other players have their own problems as well – Subaru discovers that the Silver Knight have been hiding messages from her with the latest request by the System Administrator threatening to end with disastrous results! Also avail. as Limited Edition ($39.98, avail. on 7/08/03 & 9/02/03).

12 KINGDOMS

AnimeWorks, Bilingual DVD, 125 min. ea, $29.95 ea, avail. on 7/29/03 & 9/30/03. **Vol. 1: Shadow of the Moon, the Sea of Shadow**. Upon being confronted by a mysterious blond stranger, Youko Nakajima is told of her destiny and along with two of her classmates, Sugimoto and Asano, is pulled away into another world! Thus begins Youko's perilous journey to the Kingdom of Kei on an epic road of espionage, terror, and betrayal. The Twelve Kingdoms is based on the fantasy novel series of the same name, written by Fuyumi Ono. Contains Shoku Episodes 1-5. **Vol. 2: Empress**. With the kind half-beast Rakushun as her only remaining companion, Youko is still hunted by her former friend, Sugimoto. In order to survive, she must confront the demons within and learn to live for herself!

AI YORI AOSHI

Pioneer, Cat.# 11941/42, Bilingual DVD, 125 / 100 min., $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 8/19/03 & 10/14/03. **#4: Truly Yours**. Romance is not dead, it's stalking Kaoru... First, everyone goes to the beach where Kaoru discovers that everyone but Aoi has worn a sexy swimsuit to attract his attention, then Taeko's cousin, Chika, tricks Kaoru into taking a bath with Taeko! Later, a trip to the zoo becomes a day with Tina followed by a drunken night in a love hotel! Will Aoi really believe they simply fell asleep? Fortunately, Aoi has some hidden talents, some that she saves just for Kaoru and others that she uses to save the college festival! **#5: With All My Heart**. When Aoi falls ill, everyone at the Sakuraba mansion falls apart trying to fill her shoes with the necessary household chores. Then, Kaoru invites Aoi to visit someone special, she finds herself being introduced to Kaoru's mother's grave as someone important in his life. As their love for each other truly blossoms, Kaoru and Aoi encounter a severe frost (or test) – Aoi's father forces Aoi to return home in an attempt to separate her from Kaoru forever!

ANIMATION RUNNER KUROMI
DVD

ANIMATION RUNNER KUROMI

CPM, USMD-2334, Bilingual DVD, 40 min., $29.99, 16+, avail. on 9/09/03. From Akitaroh Daichi, director of *Fruits Basket, Now and Then, Here and There* and *Jubei-Chan the Ninja Girl*. Music by Toshio Masuda (*Excel Saga*). Winner of the "Best OVA" award at the Tokyo International Anime Fair. The Ultimate Behind-the-Scenes! Ever wonder what it would be like to work for an animation studio? Kuromi just landed her dream job at the famous Studio Petit, and boy is she in for a rude awakening! The boss is hospitalized moments after she arrives (he gave his life to anime), and suddenly Kuromi is the new head of the ultimate team of slackers! It's up to her to finish "Time Journeys Episode 2," or fans everywhere will be let down. But Kuromi loves cartoons, and with good friends, high spirits and a little bit of luck, she'll deliver the best episode of "Time Journeys" ever.

ARGENTOSOMA #4: OUTSIDE SANITY

Bandai, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 8/05/03. One of the best selling sci-fi series of the year! After another fierce battle, the men and women of Funeral work diligently in their attempts to repair the base while at the same time struggle with attempts to try and revive Frank from its coma. Coming under heavy fire from another attack by the aliens, Ryu must deal with his past, present, and future with a startling secret threatening to destroy the pilots' faith in Funeral.

Aura Battler Dunbine
HEROES OF BYSTON WELL

AURA BATTLER DUNBINE #2: HEROES OF BYSTON WELL

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 12+, avail. on 8/26/03. Casting his lot with a band of courageous rebels, Show Zama quickly learns that Byston Well is a complex world where magic and mayhem have formed an uneasy alliance. As Show's journey continues, the brutality of Drake Luft's war stands in stark contrast to the wonders and beauty of fairyland. An epic, one-of-a-kind adventure, *Aura Battler Dunbine* is the stuff of which legends are made. Dive head-first into a rich, fully defined world where magic and mecha work hand-in-hand to create one of the most unique anime experiences ever envisioned.

BANNER OF THE STARS II VOL. 1: HUNTERS

Bandai, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 8/19/03. Based on the best selling novel by Hiroyuki Morioka, *Banner of the Stars* continues the epic sci-fi series *Crest of the Stars*. Imperial Calendar Year 956. Operation Phantom Flame has come to an end and has been hailed as a complete success. Now, the Imperial forces have embarked on a new plan, codenamed Operation Hunter. Their task: to hunt down and destroy any remaining enemy forces. With Lafiel's new title as Territorial Ambassador, life has been rather boring... until now. When they arrive at the recently captured planet of Lobnas, Jinto and Lafiel realize that Lobnas was once a prison planet, and now that the Abh have taken control, it has now become their problem.

BEYBLADE

Pioneer, Cat.# 11693/11964, Dubbed DVD (Closed Captioned), 125 / 100 min., $19.98 ea, 7+, avail. on 8/26/03 & 10/14/03. **#4: Topsy Turvy**. As the Asian Beyblade Tournament hits a super-suspenseful final round, Ray and his ex-teammate Lee go head-to-head in a tie-breaking grudge match. The championship is on the line as these two former friends face off! After China, the beybladers hit the road for the U.S. Tournament. Along the way, they take an awesome tour of a BBA research facility, where Max's mom works. But the team is in for a shock that will challenge their skill, their spirit and their friendships. The surprise-packed adventure continues when the guys are sent to a remote mountain retreat that teaches them the value of good practice... and true teamwork. **Vol. 5**. The American leg of the Beyblade World Championship starts off with a million dollar charity match. Max must join forces with two rival Beybladers and together take on a team of celebrity amateurs. Can these rivals put aside their difference and work together for a good a cause? After the charity match, the Bladebreakers are off to Las Vegas, Nevada to compete in the American Tournament. As they advance to the finals, Max, Tyson, Ray, Kai, and Kenny must prepare to face their toughest competition – The All-Starz. Coached by Max' mom, the All-Starz are a team of hi-tech hotshots with scientifically souped-up blades. When these two teams face off will science give the All-Starz an advantage or will teamwork, focus and determination take the Bladebreakers all the way to victory?

BOYS over FLOWERS
STORY AND ART BY YOKO KAMIO
Vol. 1

BIG O (THE) COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Bandai, Cat.# 1839, Bilingual DVD, 325 min., $44.98, 13+, avail. on 9/16/03. Paradigm City. A City of Amnesia. Forty years ago everyone lost their memory... but humanity continues to survive. They've learned to operate machinery, produce electricity, and go on living each day at a time. Still, there's something missing in a town with no past, no history of what has come before. Roger Smith is a Negotiator, hired to negotiate disputes between parties. With the power of a wondrous piece of technology known as the Big O, Roger Smith keeps Paradigm City from the nightmare of memories. Contains the first season (Eps 1-13).

BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL. 1

Viz Video, Bilingual DVD, 104 min., $24.98, avail. on 9/09/03. Based on the shoujo manga series by Kamio Youko, *Boys Over Flowers* follows the exploits of Makino Tsukushi, a seemingly typical high school student who shares secrets with her close friend Makiko Yuki, longs for a boyfriend, and generally wants to be accepted at high school. Unfortunately fate, and the F4, a gang of four Etoto High School guys who rule with a peer-pressure iron fist, have "red tagged" Tsukushi, who's now subject to the entire school's ridicule, taunting, and borderline hazing.

BRIGADOON VOL. 3: CELESTIAL WORLD

Tokyopop, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.99, 13+, avail. on 9/09/03. Earth has been engulfed by an unidentifiable mechanical presence. This presence contains the Monomakia, a living weapon, whose sole purpose is to track down 13-year-old Marin, an orphaned girl living in an alternate version of Tokyo. Young Marin's only chance to survive rests with Melan Blue, the Gun-Swordsman, who is destined to protect her.

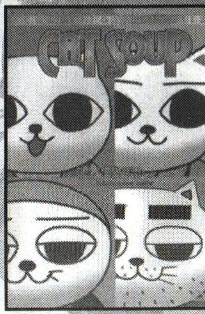
BRIGADOON
THE CELESTIAL WORLD

CARD CAPTOR SAKURA

Pioneer, Cat.# 11759/60, Subtitled DVD, 100 / 75 min., $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 9/09/03 & 11/11/03. **#17: Confessions**. Ski lessons are impossible in a blizzard, but what can Sakura do when an avalanche threatens the entire class?! Next, Touya and Yukito star in Akizuki's movie which gets too close to their real lives for comfort. Unfortunately, Yukito begins to fade forcing Touya, Sakura and Li to reveal their feelings and face their fears. When Yukito asks Sakura to really examine her heart, she is left confused. Doubting herself and her feelings, she decides to visit Clow Reed in the past. Don't worry Sakura – Li's there to help! **#18: Revelations**. The World of Darkness… Sakura worries that she can't replace Clow Reed as the master of the cards so she travels to the past to talk to Clow Reed himself for advice. On her return, Eriol reveals himself and unveils his final test. Sakura's foretelling dream comes true as the entire city is put to sleep and if she doesn't win, no one will ever wake up! As Li helps Sakura in this final battle, he finally gathers the courage to confess his feelings – now Sakura has to win and figure out what's truly in her heart! No pressure… The Final Volume!

CAT SOUP COLLECTOR'S SERIES EDITION

CPM, SSDVD-6219, 33 min., $19.99, 16+, avail. on 09/09/03. *Cat Soup* has a surreal style and compelling plot. Produced without any verbal dialogue, it features a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround soundtrack that is rich with audio effects and an impressive score. While there isn't a dialogue track, there are periodic Japanese word balloons which contain dialogue and other information relevant to the story. English subtitles have been included for each of these occurrences. From the director of *Nadesico*, Tatsuo Sato's *Cat Soup* tells the story of a little kitten, Nyaako, who embarks on a bizarre journey with her brother Natta, to get her soul back, which has been stolen by Death. In the surreal dreamscape of the Other Side, they encounter many fantastic characters and embark on various remarkable and disturbing adventures. From a hallucinatory sea voyage to a rambunctious carnival, the two kittens travel far from home and discover just how strange and miraculous the world can be. Also available as a Collector's Series Limited Edition "Liquid Art" Package (SSDVD-6218, $24.99).



CHOBITS

Pioneer, Cat.# 11864, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 16+, avail. on 9/09/03 & 11/11/03. **#4: Love Defined**. Time for a trip to the beach! But wait! Can persocoms swim? Meanwhile, his teacher, Ms. Shimizu, invites herself for a stay-over at Hideki's for some interesting games… There seems to be more going on when the ever-joyful Shinbo appears to be depressed and won't talk about it. What can Hideki do to help everyone and still study for his exams? Will he ever find time to eat? **#5: Disappearance**. While Hideki goes to school Chi goes to her job at Tirol. However, today Chi never made it to work – she's been kidnapped! Hideki frantically searches for Chi with the help of Ueda, the Tirol's manager. Ueda empathizes with Hideki's loss and reveals his own tragic experience. What other dark secrets remain hidden in this world of Persocoms?

CITY HUNTER TV: SEASON ONE, COLLECTION ONE & TWO

ADV Films, Subtitled DVDs, 650/625 min., $89.98 ea, 15+, avail. on 7/29/03. **Collection One**. Meet Ryo Seaba: ladies' man, troubleshooter and expert marksman. When you need more help than the police can provide, he's the solution. He's the City Hunter, and if he can't solve your problem, no one can. Welcome to the world of *City Hunter* where freelance troubleshooter Ryo Saeba works to keep the streets of Shinjuku safe. When calling the police just won't do, leave an "XYZ" message on the board at Shinjuku Station and the City Hunter will respond to your plea for help, especially if you happen to be a beautiful woman! **Collection Two**: The City Hunter's back and ready for more action. And a little bedroom action would be especially nice! But that's not going to happen if Kaori and her trans-dimensional hammer have anything to say about it. Fortunately, whether it's trying to get them into bed or protecting them from the forces of evil, when it comes to pretty women, Ryo doesn't know the meaning of the word "quit." The bad guys better watch out. City Hunter's on the job!

Corrector Yui
WEB OF CONFUSION

CORRECTOR YUI

Viz Video, Bilingual DVD, 125 min. ea, $24.98 ea, 07/01/03 & 9/23/03. **Vol. 1: Let's Go To COMNET.** Recruited by the globular computer network COMNET, computer-savvy Yui Kasuga is thrust into the virtual world and granted the power to become COMNET's savior, Corrector Yui, to battle against the world-threatening supercomputer Grosser and his evil Corruptors! **Vol. 2: Web Of Confusion**. While trying to convince Eco that not all humans are bad, Yui must also battle War Wolf! Then, Yui and her friends must prevent Freeze, Virus, or Jaggy from becoming "Shogun" and taking over a virtual theme park! Meanwhile, Yui travels to investigate a malfunctioning Medical Net and meets Rescue, another of the Corrector software. And finally, caught in Fairy Tale Net, Yui, IR, and Ante are stuck living out fairytales!

DESCENDANTS OF DARKNESS #4: DEMON'S RECKONING

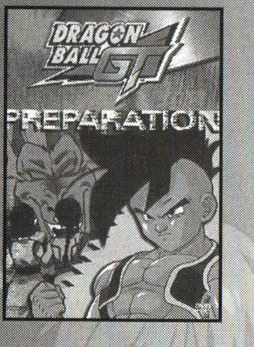
CPM, Cat.# USMD 2219, 100 min., $29.99, 13+, avail. on 7/8/03. A Demon Snare! A mad scientist stalks Tsuzuki, seeking to cage him and clone his supernatural powers. Trapped in the diabolical doctor's laboratory, Tsuzuki comes face to face with his oldest enemy, a vengeful immortal who has hunted him throughout his afterlife. Now, his brash young partner must rescue him from the killer's underground lair, before Tsuzuki loses his soul and sanity to the demon, and is forced to make the ultimate sacrifice! Contains episodes 10-13.

DEVIL LADY (THE) #6: THE VICTORIOUS

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 17+, avail. on 8/05/03. Primeval texts speak of the time when Earth will be the staging ground for ultimate war between Good and Evil. Wild-eyed seers prophesy valleys flooded in blood and the sins of generations paid for in the carnage of twisted flesh. Terrified masses quake in anticipation of the last round in the never-ending struggle between God and Devil. Skeptics ridicule such impassioned visions. Rational minds revolt against impossible prophecies. Academia unites to disavow these fatalistic notions. And yet the time has come when no one can deny what is happening before his eyes. Against all reason, the terrifying events foretold in the dusty scrolls of another time are taking place all over the world. All mankind must accept the fate handed them by their unseen rulers. Only one woman can change that fate. Part human. Part beast. The Devil Lady. Pray she can hold back the inevitable midnight. Created by Go Nagai (*Getter Robo*, *Mazinger Z* and *Grandizer*, and the *Devilman* series, from which *The Devil Lady* sprung). Adapted by Toshihiro Hirano (director of *Vampire Princess Miyu*) and writer Chiako Konaka. Contains episodes 22 through 26.

DNA^2

U.S. Manga Corp., Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea, $29.99 ea, 13+, avail. on 6/10/03, 8/12/03 & 10/14/03. From the creator of *Video Girl Ai* and the main staff of *Geobreeders*, comes a romantic sci-fi comedy for all times! **Vol. 3: Mutation**. Beautiful but bungling time traveler Karin Aoi accidentally transforms a high school loser into the super-charming Mega-Playboy, with disastrous results. Unfortunately, if she cures him, she'll lose the only man she's ever loved, but if she doesn't, the Mega-Playboy will break the heart of every girl on Earth! Contains episodes 7-9. **Vol. 4: Crossfire**. Contains episodes 10-12. **Vol. 5: Epiphany.** Is this the end of the mega-playboy? Junta's teenage great-granddaughter Lulara appears from the future, but not for a joyful family reunion. To save her own life and the future of all her kin, she's determined to transform Junta into the Mega-Playboy for good. His one chance for survival may be to destroy his flirtatious alter ego… but if he succeeds, his great-granddaughter might disappear forever! Contains episodes 13-15. Also avail.: **DNA^2 DVD Collection** (USMD-2319, 375 min., $119.99).



DRAGONBALL GT

FUNimation, Bilingual DVD, Uncut, 62 min. ea, $24.95 ea, 13+, avail. on 6/03/03 (#3-4) & 7/15/03 (#5-6). **#3: Creation**: The most dangerous threat the galaxy has ever known has arrived! With the truth about his connection to Dr. Myuu in the open, Baby begins his assault on his most hated enemies… the Saiyans! Meanwhile, Goku, Pan, and Trunks continue their hunt for the dragon balls. Their search leads them to a battered ship about to be crushed by the gravity of a nearby star! With a dragon ball detected onboard, the three Saiyans must risk life and limb to recover the powerful orb… or watch the fate of the Earth fade away with the obliterated spacecraft! But wait! Someone… or something… is still alive on the doomed craft! **#4: Proliferation**: Baby's hunt for Saiyans reaches a new level of danger as he begins to make his way across the globe, leaving his seed of evil planted in his wake. But when Baby crosses paths with Gohan and Goten, a showdown is inevitable! Baby knows that he must defeat the powerful brothers if he is to have a shot at his ultimate prize… Vegeta! Baby must hurry if he is to subjugate the planet before Goku, Trunks, and Pan arrive back on Earth. The race for the fate of Earth is on! **#5: Ramifications**: After returning to Earth and giving the dragon balls to Dende for safekeeping, Goku, Pan, and Trunks believe they have saved the planet from destruction. But upon returning home… and receiving far less than a hero's welcome… they quickly learn that the entire planet is under Baby's control! Goku rushes to confront Baby, but soon finds himself on the business end of a deadly assault! Is it true? Can Goku be gone forever?! **#6: Preparation**: After delivering Pan from the grip of Baby-Vegeta, Uub begins his assault! Goku tried his best to train Uub for this moment, but when Baby-Vegeta turns Uub's best shot against him, Goku's young protégé is beaten and devoured! Watching from the safe haven of the Heavenly Realm, Goku undergoes torturous training to prepare himself for the inevitable final showdown with Baby! If successful, Goku stands to reach a level of power greater than anyone could possibly imagine… the unbelievable Super Saiyan 4!

EDEN'S BOWY

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 125/100 min., $29.98 ea, 12+, avail. on 7-15-03 & 8/26/03. **#2: Hot Pursuit**. Yorn, Elisis, and that strange old man are on a quest – and on the run! No matter how fast they fly, the assassins from Eden are one step behind and gaining fast. Maybe it's the technology: radar, hovercraft, and a submarine mecha you've got to see to believe! These killers sport as much horsepower as firepower. How can a kid with a funky sword, a shapeshifting girl, and an aging warrior hope to make it in one piece? The adventures of *Eden's Bowy* continue! Yorn and his friends battle the enemy, the elements, and their own empty bellies in their quest to save the earth from the twin terrors of Yanuess and Yulgaha. What enemies lurk beneath the sea? What horrors haunt the desert cathedral? And what happens when an assassin tempts the God Hunter toward Eden? **#3: Nowhere to Run**. At last, the quest is complete! The journey is over! They've found the princess! Or have they? When Yorn and his companions finally reach Rubeed, Yorn's mother has vanished. In fact, the whole town's deserted – but not for long. Yulgaha orders an army into the city with one goal: capture the princess and kill anyone who gets in the way. The assassins from Yanuess rush to join the fun. Giant claymen, hordes of soldiers – the battle is on! Will our heroes get caught in the crossfire? Elisis is back, but can even her alter ego Seeda save them this time? Will the old man's bag of tricks finally come up empty? And will Yorn stop gawking at the cool guns long enough to dodge the bullets? Based on a manga by Tennoji Kitsune, directed by Tsukasa Sunaga (*Southern Cross*), with character designs by Kazui Hiroko (*Ranma 1/2, Oh! My Goddess!)*.

FIGURE 17 VOL. 1: SOUL MIRROR

AnimeWorks, Bilingual DVD, 150 min., $29.95, avail. on 9/26/03. Shy elementary school outcast Tsubasa stumbles upon a downed alien spacecraft in the wake of a shooting star, changing her life dramatically! Invited to join the aliens DD, Ordina, and Hikaru in their mission to save the Earth from the menace of the Magyua, Tsubasa is granted a "clone" named Hikaru, which unites with her to form the Figure 17, a bio-humanoid combat system! When the invading forces of the Magyua arrive, will Tsubasa have the courage and confidence to fight?

FIST OF THE NORTH STAR TV SERIES VOL. 3 & 4

Manga, 120 min. ea., $24.95 ea., avail. on 7/29/03. Under this eternal light walks a lone warrior who bears the mark of the Great Bear upon his mighty, battle-scarred chest – a man of power and purity; a living beacon of hope destined to bring light to the darkness; a legendary fighter able to call upon arcane powers as ancient as the universe itself. He isthe sole practitioner of a lost martial art that fights the unrestrained violence of this new age with an even greater brand of violence. An uncompromising force for justice; a defender of the weak and disenfranchised rabble of the post-apocalyptic wastes, he is Kenshiro, the *Fist of the North Star.*

GENESHAFT

Bandai, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 7/15/03 & 9/16/03. **#2: Halo**. In deep space, the Bilkis is proceeding with its mission to annihilate the Rings and protect humanity. A small Ring has infiltrated the ship and has begun cloning the crew one by one in an attempt to steal the Shaft. The past comes back to haunt them when the crew discovers a 21st century space shuttle floating in space! Soon after, the Bilkis is thrown into a new battle and the firing of a new beam weapon which annihilates the enemy Ring. The crew begins to wonder what Mika did, including herself. On their return to base, the crew is in for a nasty surprise! **#3: Orbit**. Things aren't going well aboard the Bilkis. The Shaft is still buggy, and despite the best efforts of Dolce, it doesn't seem to be getting any better. And they've all been declared traitors by the I.E.O. since they left seemingly without orders! With the Captain falling into a coma, the arrival of the fleet, and the revelation that a terrorist is hidden within their midst – a life or death struggle will ensue with everyone's lives on the edge.

HAIBANE RENMEI

Pioneer, Bilingual DVD, 100 / 75 min., $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 8/26/03 & 10/28/03. **#1: New Feather**. In a long-forgotten walled town, humans coexist with the Haibane, angelic-like beings of unknown origin. Rakka becomes the newest Haibane, after she awakens from a strange dream and finds herself hatching from a massive cocoon. With no memories of her previous life, Rakka struggles to adjust to her new surroundings, however burning questions remain in the back of her mind. What is Haibane and what is their purpose? What lies beyond the huge, forbidden town walls? Thus Rakka begins her wistful journey of self-discovery and wonderment. **#2: Wings Of Sorrow**. Rakka works with Nemu at the library to find her place in life and renews her curiosity about the outside world. Kuu, a younger Haibane who is normally bright and cheerful, helps Rakka to find her place in the Old Home, but then becomes subdued and her halo begins to fade! Rakka's worries become a desperate search when Kuu goes missing – is this related to the "Day of Flight"? Overwhelmed with sadness, Rakka is further shocked by a revelation about Reki's past! Created by Yoshitoshi ABe (*Serial Experiments Lain, NieA_7*), art direction by Shinji Katahira (*Hellsing, AD Police*), Directed by Tomokazu Tokoro (*NieA_7*).

HEATGUY J #2: VAMPIRE'S AMBITION

Pioneer, Cat.# 12053, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 10/14/03. The mafia strikes back! Claire, the leader of Judoh's crime syndicates, first tries to destroy J through a child and the city's own corruption, and then he tricks Daisuke's into a plot to make the mafia a fortune on tomato futures. Will Claire succeed in destroying them both? From Judoh's underground slums to its gleaming concert halls, after the bullets stop flying J and Daisuke still rise from the steam! Directed, planned and created by Akane Kazuki (*Escaflowne* the Movie, *Escaflowne* TV, *Geneshaft, Fatal Fury* OVA), with character designs by Nobuteru Yuuki (*Escaflowne, X* the Movie, *Battle Angel, Angel Cop, Record of Lodoss War*), and animation by Satelight (*Arjuna, Geneshaft, Macross Zero*).

HIS AND HER CIRCUMSTANCES #5: ALTERATIONS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

Right Stuf, RSDVD8015, Bilingual DVD, 150 min., $29.95, 13+, avail. on 9/30/03. Yukino has finally decided she will do Aya's play, but with Culture Fest deadlines looming, not everyone is being so supportive of her determination to make her acting debut. Maho is refusing to take part, the student council members are telling her to give up, and the other clubs have already claimed all of the materials and practice space. In the midst of the turmoil, Yukino is about to uncover help from some very unexpected sources – Mr. Kawashima and... Asaba?!? With everyone else working hard on Aya's play, Arima is feeling alone and depressed. Yukino seems to be changing. Does she really even need him anymore? Contains Episodes 22-26. Also avail.: ***His And Her Circumstances* DVD Box Set** (RSDVD8016, 780 min., $129.95).

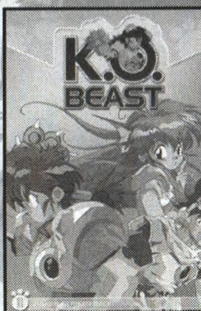
INITIAL D

Tokyopop, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.99, 16+, avail. on 9/16/03. **Vol. 1.** In the shadow of Akina Mountain, street racers take on one of the most dangerous roads in the world. Among them, a Trueno AE86, 'The Ghost of Akina,' tears through the pass like a phantom no other car can touch. Behind the wheel is Takumi Fujiwara, a tofu delivery boy on his way to becoming the greatest street racer ever. But even with a natural talent honed simply through his love of racing, nothing could have prepared Takumi for the world of hardcore street racing!

AE86
BATTLE 01

K.O. BEAST #2: V-DARN STRIKES BACK!

Right Stuf, RSDVD2032, Bilingual DVD, 60 min., $24.95, 13+, avail. on 8/26/03. Who knew treasure hunting could make life so miserable? After constant battles with the Humans, our rowdy band of heroes is in quite a mess. With their Jinns badly damaged, they're off to Atlas City to find Don the Repairer who's rumored to have the ability to fix anything – for a price of course. But with very little pocket money and their Jinns out of action, they could be in for some serious trouble! V-Darn's been waiting for them in Atlas City and he's determined to finally have his revenge on our little band of treasure hunters! With Mei-Mer on the verge of death, Wan is determined to grant her last request, even when it could cost him his own life. More laughter, tears, and off-the-wall surprises in this second great volume of *K.O. Beast*!



LOVE HINA AGAIN THE MOVIE

Bandai, Cat.# 1908, Bilingual DVD, 93 min., $29.98, 16+, avail. on 9/02/03. Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the Hot Spring! Keitaro and Naru have finally begun college life at Tokyo University! After a long period of studying, bizarre happenings, random trips, and misunderstanding upon misunderstanding, their dream has finally come true! However, their feelings for each other are still a little… muddled. And with a newer, stricter, manager to run the Hinata Apartments – Will anyone survive Hinata Boot Camp? It's Love (Hina) Again. Welcome back.

LUPIN THE 3RD THE MOVIE : SECRET OF MAMO

Pioneer, Cat.# 11944, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 16+, avail. on 7/29/03. The world's most wanted master thief, Lupin the Third is dead! Despite a coroner's report, Interpol Inspector Zenigata is skeptical and discovers that Lupin is actually alive and well and stealing! But who had set up Lupin's death and why? For now, questions are set aside, as Lupin, Jigen and Goemon immediately embark to Egypt to pilfer a stone artifact from a pyramid, with Zenigata in hot pursuit. Fujiko, lured by the promise of eternal youth and beauty by the sinister and enigmatic scientist known as Mamo, doublecrosses Lupin and steals the stone. Her betrayal causes a rift between Lupin and his cohorts, causing the trio to split up, but eventually leads Lupin to Mamo's hideaway, where he discovers the madman's dark secret and a fiendish scheme that threatens the entire planet! Now, it's up to Lupin to stop the insane Mamo – before he can complete his 10,000 year-old plans of world domination.

MAHOROMATIC 2: SOMETHING MORE BEAUTIFUL

Pioneer, Cat.# 11900/01, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 16+, avail. on 8/26/03 & 10/28/03. **#1: Maid In Training**. Who's Minawa? Just as life finally returns to "normal", a new girl shows up spying on Suguru. Who is she? Another combat android?! Who could she be working for? A new mystery besets our friends as Sugur and Mahoro try to determine whom this clumsy and shy android could be. In the meantime, Mahoro has adopted her as a little sister and a maid in training. Unfortunately, for our new maid, Minawa gets to experience Suguru's frenetic lifestyle, which includes Mahoro's plan for a larger bust-line... **#2: Hectic Holidays**. From Christmas to New Years and on to Valentine's Day, Mahoro's presence makes each passing holiday more memorable and entertaining than the last! Yet a local Hiryu event may be the most surprising holiday yet with it's odd custom of ferocious combat! Look out – these "simple" townsfolk are more skilled than they appear!

MASTER KEATON

Pioneer, Cat.# 11915/16, Bilingual DVD, 110 / 125 min., $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 8/12/03 & 10/14/03. **#2: Excavation II**. His job is Danger, his office is the World! Trouble always finds Taichi Keaton, but even the most violent cases are overpowered by his razor sharp intellect! Keaton begins his adventures at an archeological dig in England where and old friend uses the techniques her mother used to fight Nazis in WWII to save an ancient burial site. Next, Keaton returns home to Japan for a quiet vacation with his daughter, but his father arrives along with a heat wave! Then it's back to Europe to tackle kidnappers in England, old ladies on German trains and a murder case involving the famous detective, Charlie Chapman. From secret treasures to hidden killers, you can't lose with Master Keaton! **#3: Killer Conscience**. From the innocuous to the Intense! Keaton often applies his skills to a variety of challenges, from uncovering secret recipes to solving murder mysteries. Then again, sometimes the cases come to him with a vengeance! Whether its an IRA bomb maker and his belated conscience forcing Keaton to diffuse bombs in a crowded shopping mall or a search for a missing daughter in Germany, Keaton always depends upon his ability to think. Yet this time, his real challenge for survival comes in the mountains of Spain against a killer on four legs!

MAZINKAISER #1: TURBO SMASHING SENSATION

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 8/26/03. Dr. Hell has resurrected an ancient army of mechanical monsters to conquer the world, but first he has to destroy the photon power lab and the one thing standing in his way: Mazinger! But it's going to take more than defeating Mazinger for Dr. Hell and his evil henchman Baron Ashura to clear their way for world domination, because there's a new kid in town — MAZINKAISER — and he packs quite an atomic punch! Can young Kouji Kabuto, as the runner behind the amazing robot Mazinkaiser, deal out the thunder faster than Dr. Hell's army can take it? With the help of the team of Mazinger, Boss Borot, and Venus Ace, photon power may yet save the world! The latest tie-in to legendary director Go Nagai's mecha classic *Mazinger Z* — the first-ever anime or manga robot piloted by a human, which launched the super-robot era of 1970s anime.

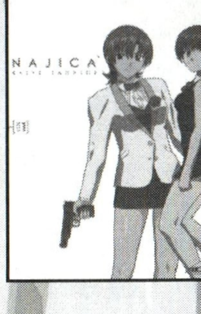
VOLUME 1: TURBO SMASHING SENSATION!
MAZINKAISER
ALL NEW STATE OF THE ART ANIMATION

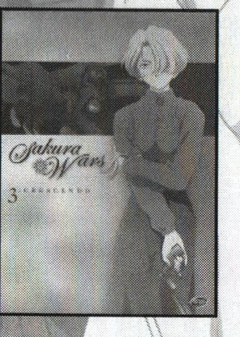
MEDABOTS #11: MEDABOTS TO THE TOURNAMENT

ADV Films, Dubbed DVD, 100 min., $14.98, G, avail. on 9/02/03. The World Robattle Tournament is finally underway. So far, Team Japan has managed to win its matches, but it hasn't been easy. And it hasn't helped that Space Medafighter X has been a different medafighter in every match. After narrowly defeating the Caribbean, French, and Mexican teams, Ikki and Koji now have to face the extremely popular and powerful Swedish team. Will Ikki and Metabee be able to unite a struggling Japanese team and make it to the final rounds of the World Robattle? Don't miss the robattling action in the newest volume of ***Medabots***! Directed by Katsuhisa Yamada (*Battle of the Planets, Devil Hunter Yohko*). Contains episodes 44 through 47. Also available in VHS ($9.98).

NAJICA BLITZ TACTICS: VOL. 1

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 17+, avail. on 8/19/03. As one of the world's top perfume designers, Najica Hiiragi works with her trusty assistant Kirala to develop the Day Series perfumes for CRI Cosmetics. When not jet-setting around the world, Najica tools around neo-Tokyo in a bright red convertible. Men love her. Women want to be her. But Najica has another job, one that few ever see: Secret agent for the CRI intelligence organization. Her boss is the cool, calculating Majima, and she gets field support from the lecherous, but technology-savvy, Gento. Najica's life gets complicated when she rescues a young girl, Lila, from the clutches of a depraved socialite and her machine-gun wielding maids. But Lila is no ordinary girl; she's a Humaritt, an android, and she is Najica's new partner! Together, Najica and Lila thwart a mob hit on the daughter of a judge, defeat an international playboy with a penchant for satellite weaponry, and discover the real reason teenage pop idols are so darn popular! Directed by Katsuihiko Nishijima (*Project A-ko, Labyrinth of Flames*), and with animation direction by Noriyasu Yamauchi (*Guyver: Out of Control*). Also available as a collectors' edition ($44.98) including the DVD and a custom series art box, sized to hold the entire series AND an exclusive pair of white cotton *Najica Blitz Tactics* bikini-cut panties!





NEO RANGA #4: A NATION APART

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 120 min., $29.98, 17+, avail. on 8/19/03. Neo Ranga's back! And a warm welcome is the last thing on the Japanese government's agenda, though there's not much it can do to move a gargantuan monster with god-like powers. On the fringes, Neo Ranga's enemies continue their attacks, waging war both in the streets and in the minds of people. Spreading lies, kidnapping loved ones, resurrecting new gods — nothing is off limits when the stakes are this high. Will the Shimabara sisters be able to win the people over? Or will they face an entire country's wrath? From intrigue to ingénues to battles with behemoths, this gripping volume of Neo Ranga has it all! Directed by Jun Kamiya (*Blue Seed*).

NINJA SCROLL TV SERIES VOL. 1

Urban Vision, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $24.95, avail. on 9/02/03. Directed by Tatsuo Sato (*Nadesico*), and featuring character designs by Takahiro Yoshimatsu (*Trigun*) and animation by Madhouse Studios, *Ninja Scroll*: The Series continues where Yoshiaki Kawajiri's 1993 award-winning feature left off! Based on Futaro Yamada's *Jubei* novels, this 13-part series follows the harrowing exploits of a lone swordsman who upholds the samurai tradition in the face of the importation of western weapons and ideals.

NOIR #5: TERMINAL VELOCITY

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 75 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 8/05/03. As the secrets of Mireille's past are unearthed from their graves in Corsica, Kirika's own grim history slowly begins to reveal itself. The revelations bring no conclusions or happiness, however; only murder and death. As Chloe and Altena wait in the shadows, the malevolent intent of the Soldats finally becomes clear. The darkness begins to consume the light as the four horsewomen of the Apocalypse prepare for battle. The lines in the sand have been drawn in the fifth electrifying volume of *NOIR*! Directed by Koichi Mashimo (*Dirty Pair, Dominion*).

PLEASE TEACHER!

Bandai, Bilingual DVD, 100/75 min., $29.98 ea, 16+, avail. on 7/08/03 & 9/02/03. **#2: Meet In The In-Laws.** Kei and Mizuho's honeymoon summer vacation in Okinawa is interrupted when they discover that Hyosuke and the gang are vacationing there too! Though the honeymooners can't seem to get any time alone, the buds of love begin to blossom for another unlikely couple. Things don't get any easier when they get home. Mizuho's sister, Maho and her mother, Hatsuho, visit Earth respectively and both express their protest and delight to the newlyweds. Now Kei has to dodge the death threats of his sister-in-law and the romantic advances of his mother-in-law, as well as play cupid for his friend! Will Kei ever have the chance to say those three simple words to his teacher? **#3: The Honeymoon's Over**. Our favorite newlyweds are finally able to settle into a daily routine, but they still have their trials. One night, Kei's love for Mizuho is tested when Koishi asks him to meet her in an attempt to profess her love, but at the same time, Kei must fight feelings of jealousy when Matagu asks Ms. Kazami for help with his homework! Attempts by Ichigo to set-up Kei and Koishi have been futile, but what happens if Kei does go out with Koishi – Can he really make everyone happy?

RAHXEPHON ORCHESTRATION 4: DISSONANCE

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 7/29/03. Tremors ripple through the city as new Dolems attack, but the most dangerous shock waves of all are the mental assaults that now threaten to overwhelm Ayato's grasp of the physical world itself. As new players enter the deadly game between the humans and the Mu, the young pilot finds himself alone and without backup, struggling to rebuild the foundation of his own reality as the universe threatens to collapse beneath him. The secrets of Ixtli begin to reveal themselves in the fourth shocking volume of *RahXephon*! *RahXephon* was created and directed by Yutaka Izubuchi (*Gasaraki*, the *Gundam* franchise), and produced by Bones (*Angelic Layer*), Victor Entertainment (*Noir*) and Fuji TV (*Astro Boy, Battle of the Planets*).

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA

CPM, SSDVD-6211/12, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea, $29.99 ea, 13+., avail. on 9/09/03 & 10/14/03. From Kunihiko Ikuhara (Director of *Sailor Moon*), Shinya Hasegawa (Key Animation Supervisor of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*), and based on the original manga by Chiho Saito. **#8: Unveiling**. Nanami discovers a terrible secret about her brother and runs away from home. Separated from the one person she loves the most, she begins to discover the true nature of her friends. Confronted with the cold indifference of the outside world and the cruelty of her peers, Nanami must decide whether to return home and live a lie, or to strike out on her own and build a new life. Contains episodes 31-33. **#9: Revelation.** The unthinkable has happened: Utena has fallen in love with her best friend's older brother. Although he is engaged to another woman, he seems to return her affections. But to be his princess, Utena must give up her goal of becoming a prince. Will her budding romance destroy her lifelong dream... and her precious friendship with Anthy? Contains episodes 34-36.

RUNE SOLDIER #3: A TRUE CHAMPION?

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 7/29/03. It looks as though it's going to be a long, hot, uneventful summer for Louie and the gang. To make ends meet, Louie takes a side job as a porter, which his friend Ila takes full advantage of. Then it starts... snowing? Later, Ila gets a letter from the magician responsible for the weather, so she convinces the team to seek him out. Unfortunately, the forces of nature have other ideas! And as if jobs weren't scarce enough, Melissa's rival, Isabel, now has a champion and a team of her own! Demented demons, carnivorous camellias, and petulant priestesses – it's all in a day's work for the heroes of *Rune Soldier*! An anime adventure tale, combining fantasy, magic, comedy and epic quests in one irreverent package. Created by Ryo Mizuno, the mind behind the acclaimed *Record of Lodoss War* anime.

SAKURA WARS THE MOVIE

Pioneer, Cat.# 11936, Bilingual DVD, 85 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 9/09/03. The Imperial Fighting Troupe is called again to defend Tokyo against the demons. However, this time, the Douglas-Stewart Company is selling a superior fighting machine that will revolutionize Japan's defense and make the Flower Division obsolete. However, the girls suspect something may be wrong when members of their team begin to vanish! But what can they do when their division has been placed on indefinite stand-by status? Also avail. as a Limited edition version (packaged with a set of ten collectible mini-pencil boards; Cat.# 12086, $39.98).

SAKURA WARS TV #3: CRESCENDO

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 12+, avail. on 8/19/03. The forces of evil are growing stronger – even Mother Nature has turned traitor and is itching for a fight. The world needs a team of defenders: a dedicated group that will work together in harmony and ace precision; a band that will refuse to give into their petty squabbles and haunting pasts in order to stand strong against the forces of chaos! Unfortunately, all it has is the Imperial Flower Combat Troop...

S-CRY-ED #2: THE ALTER HUNT

Bandai, Cat.# 2361, Bilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 9/02/03. After repeated attacks against HOLD and HOLY, Commander Zigmarl is forced to initiate an operation to capture all the Native Alters in the Lost Ground. Spread across the city, the forces of HOLD and HOLY begin arresting everyone in their path. Determined to protect what they have, Kimishima and Kazuma rally as many Native Alters they can find to fight back! An uneasy alliance and the beginning of an unparalled rivalry between Kazuma and Ryuho – The secret to victory rests with the mystery behind Alter powers.

SPIRIT OF WONDER THE MOVIE

Bandai, Cat.# 2260, Bilingual DVD, 97 min., $29.98, 16+, avail. on 9/16/03. Brand new adventures awaits those who seek a new "Spirit of Wonder". As young boys, Cooper, Gordon, and Shepherd were enchanted by the theories of life on Mars published by Percival Lowell. Forming a group club called the "Scientific Boys Club" the trio will embark upon their long-time dream of traveling to Mars! And while the town of Bristol may be small, it's always exciting! What'll happen when the town's very own Miss China is shrunken to the size of a pea? Take a new voyage with two very special short stories "Shrinking of Miss China" and "Planet of Miss China."

STEEL ANGEL KURUMI 2: THE LIPS OF A NEW MASTER

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, 17+, avail. on 8/12/03. Another kiss brings Kurumi back to life in the 21st century. Only this time, Kurumi's got eyes for a new Master: the awkward ninth grade cellist, Nako, who lives at the old shrine with her perky, plotting mother. But Nako's neighbor Uruka, the spoiled daughter of a multi-billionaire, is jealous, and the girl's father will stop at nothing to ensure his darling daughter's happiness – even if it means awakening Kurumi's long lost sister, Saki, to get her out of the way! It's six new episodes set in a new century, with a new Master and new Steel Angel abilities. But if there's one thing that always gets Kurumi going, it's messing with someone close to her Mark II heart!

SUGAR, A LITTLE SNOW FAIRY

Pioneer, Cat.# 12032/33, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 3+, avail. on 8/12/03 & 10/14/03. **#3: The Bear Pianist**. For the first time in a long while, a theater troupe visits Saga's town. When Saga has trouble explaining what a Play is, Sugar, Salt and Pepper decide to investigate. They sneak into the theater, but when they find a bear playing the piano they become even more confused! Meanwhile everyone in town is excited about the play, "The Bear Pianist," but Saga cannot stop thinking about a handsome customer from the coffee shop, Vincent, who said her coffee was "a bit stiff." The next day, when Saga goes to see the play with her friends, the beautiful sounds of the piano start the play – and open the curtain on surprise after surprise! **#4: Magical Sparkling Days**. Did you know fairies make it rain? Sugar's Magical Flower begins to bud!! But how can it grow if she hasn't found a "Twinkle"? Basil and Cinnamon accuse Sugar of cheating, so now Sugar desperately continues her search. Meanwhile, Pepper struggles to give a flying lesson to a turtle, because she believes any sincere dream can come true. The apprentice Season Fairies' lives are busier and noisier ever, so naturally Saga's is too! Directed by Shichiro Kobayashi (*Berzerk, Utena, Kimagure Orange Road, Panda! Go Panda!*).

THOSE WHO HUNT ELVES II VOL. 1

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 150 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 8/26/03. When the spell to return them to their home goes terribly awry, judo-jerk Junpei, Airi the actress, and rifle-ready Ritsuko must rely on the egomaniacal elf Celcia to help them return home. Once again, they're forced to strip elves to find the magical tattoos that will teleport them back to Earth. So join the elf hunters as they swim with sharks, search for tattoos and toilet paper, and brave both obnoxious bears and falling stars!

THOSE WHO HUNT
ELVES II

VANILLA SERIES (THE): SLAVE SISTERS

Critical Mass, CMDVD6987, 60 min., $24.95, 18+, avail. on 8/26/2003. A nightmarish tale of lust and debauchery for two sisters as they're forced to become Sex Slaves! Slavery or Death? Yukari Isshiki always believed her life would be full of laughter and happiness. Surrounded by her parents and younger sister, Miku, she seemed to have it all. But that was before... before IT happened. In an instant, Yukari lost both her parents and her freedom. Inheriting a massive debt to a powerful crime syndicate, she was given only two options for her and her sister: become Sex Slaves, or be killed. Forced into a life they never imagined in their worst nightmares, Yukari and Miku's innocence is about to be shattered as the two sisters enter into a world of lust, debauchery, and cruelty. Under the guidance of Shunji Iwashiro, a sex slave trainer, they will be taught everything from public humiliation and S&M to anticipating any possible sexual craving their new masters could imagine. They'll be trained to please. Please their clients, their trainer... and even each other. NOTE: The *Vanilla Series* volumes are stand alone, and are not episodic. Each volume contains a new story of erotically charged fantasy.

WEATHERING CONTINENT

AnimeWorks, 125 min., $29.95, 13+, avail. on 7/29/03. Long before the roots of history, there was a magnificent Continent in the Atlantic torn by generations of wars, its people stricken by natural disasters and starvation. Tieh, Lakushi, and Bois are three wanderers in this bleak world, looking only to survive and preserve what they can of their humanity. The three will fight for their one goal, to live another day on this barren Continent.

WEATHERING
CONTINENT

X TV SERIES

Pioneer, Cat.# 11829/30, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 16+, avail. on 7/22/93 & 9/23/03. **Six:** After Fuma, the second "Kamui," joins the Dragons of Earth, the attack on Tokyo turns even more brutal. Half-blinded in battle with Fuma, Subaru nevertheless faces off against Seishiro. But for these two, this battle will bring everything in their past to a feverish finale! **Seven**: The battle between the Dragons of Heaven and Earth rages with deadly consequences, as Seiichiro, a Dragon of Heaven, secretly challenges Yuto. Karen discovers his plan, and puts Seiichiro to sleep then heads to the battlefield, determined to fight Yuto herself. She is sure that her sacrifice will not be missed, while the more mature Dragon's would! Satsuki realizes her real feeling towards Yuto but when she orders Beast to help Yuto during his battle, she gets a nasty shock — the mechanical Beast no longer obeys her! Frustrated at the turn of events Kamui asks Hinoto for the next possible attack point, but notices Hinoto acting strangely...

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST! THE MOTION PICTURE

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 7/29/03. The hard-working men and women of the Bokuto Traffic Corps are back on the scene, but this time they've got more to worry about than everyday traffic violations! During a routine arrest, they recover a secret document. Contained within it are step-by-step instructions to terrorists on how to wipe Tokyo off the map! Even the precinct station isn't safe from the bloodthirsty murderers that want this information, or from the rogue who wrote it. Can Miyuki and Natsume rally their fellow officers in time to save themselves and the city? Or is Tokyo doomed to destruction at the hands of a vengeful madman? The fastest and wildest policewomen in Japan are up against their greatest challenge ever*!*

YU YU HAKUSHO GHOST FILES

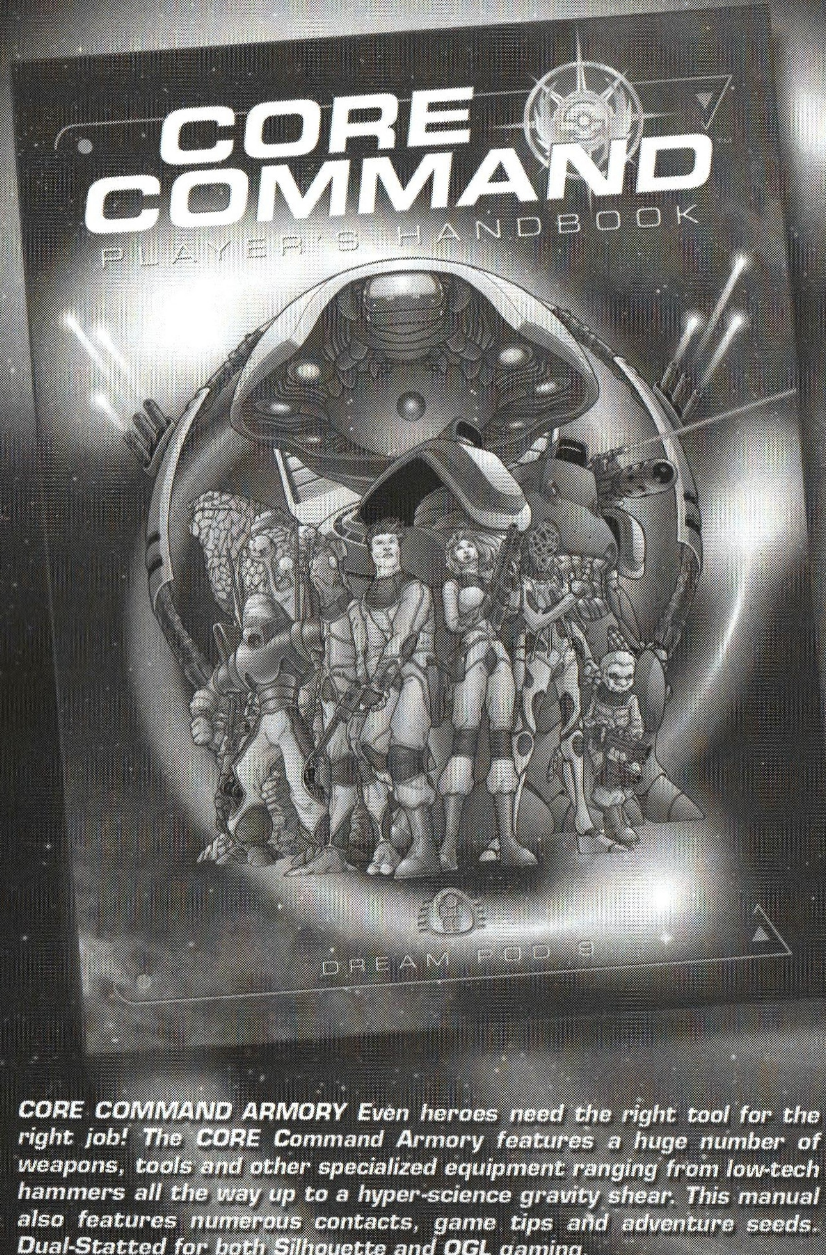
FUNimation, Bilingual DVD, Uncut, 62 min., $24.95, 13+, avail. on 7/08/03 & 9/02/03. **#15: Settle The Score** (Eps 51-53). Yusuke Urameshi has survived many battles in life, death, and beyond. But as his teacher and mentor heads toward her own destruction, the Spirit Detective finds himself unable to do anything about it! Still locked in a deep slumber recovering from his ordeal, Yusuke dreams away as the nightmarish confrontation between Genkai and Toguro begins. The history of Genkai and Toguro is finally revealed as the last chapter of their twisted relationship turns the page on a new beginning in Yusuke's life. **#16: Yoko Kurama** (Eps 54-56). The long awaited Finals of the Dark Tournament have arrived! It's Team Urameshi against arch-rivals Team Toguro in a winner take all battle where the penalty for losing is certain death! In a stunning development both owners of the rival teams declare themselves eligible to fight! Kurama hopes that this won't be necessary as he transforms into the powerful Yoko Kurama! But when Karasu counters Yoko's best attack, the half-human hero finds himself drained of all his spirit energy! Is this the end of Kurama?!

YU·YU·HAKUSHO
SETTLE THE SCORE

YU-GI-OH! VOL. 11: BEST OF FRIENDS, BEST OF DUELISTS

FUNimation, Dubbed DVD, 100 min., $19.95, G, avail. on 7/22/03. **Ep. 31: Keith's Machination Part I**. Joey frantically searches for the card that permits him to enter the final battle, not realizing Bandit Keith has stolen it from him. As he struggles to accept the fact that Serenity will be blind forever, he receives help from a new and unexpected friend! **Ep. 32: Keith's Machination Part II**. After Bandit Keith's Machine deck forces Joey to take the defensive, Joey mimics Keith's battle strategy to metallize his Red-Eyes B. Dragon! Is victory assured? Or does the cheater Bandit Keith literally have one last card up his sleeve? **Ep. 33: Best of Friends, Best of Duelists Part I**. With his pride in his strength as a duelist on the line, Joey challenges Yugi for the right to face Pegasus. In a battle between friends, a fierce match ensues between the two people who know each other's strategies and cards as they struggle to keep their thoughts of past loyalties at the back of their minds. **Ep. 34: Best of Friends, Best of Duelists Part II**. Yugi is shocked as Joey uses the Time Wizard card on him. It's the very same card Yugi gave Joey as a sign of friendship! However, as the two battle each other valiantly and one comes out the victor, they find confirmation of the strength of their friendship that surpasses any duel. Also avail. on VHS ($14.95).

CORE COMMAND



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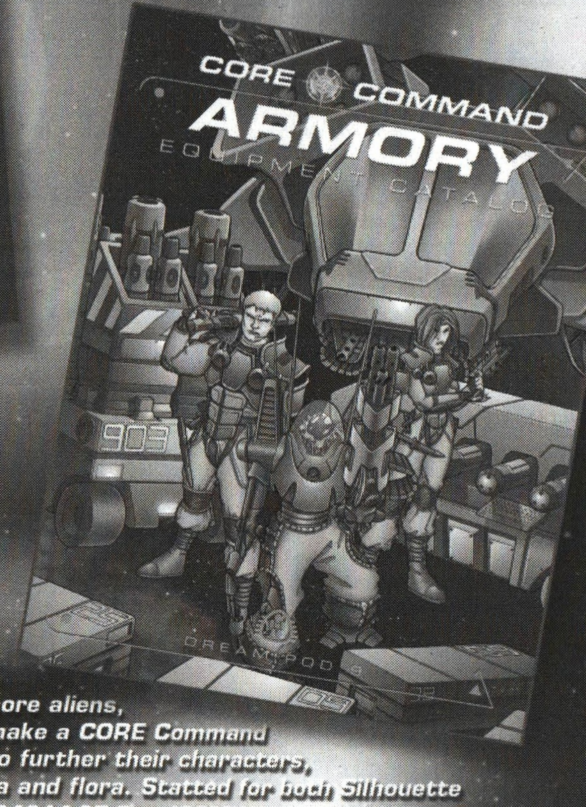
- Plots so big, they threaten the known universe;

- And of course, big nasty aliens.



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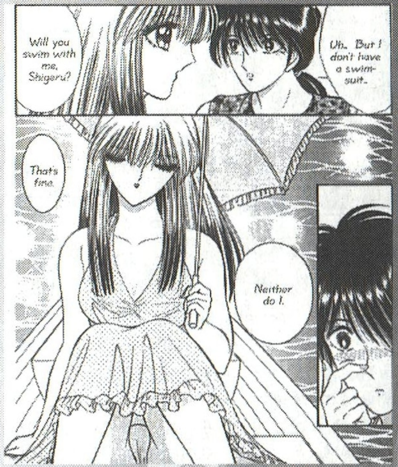
THE TOP SHELF

Because even adult anime and manga titles deserve critical analysis by a hack freelance anime journalist.

Eden

EDEN
FRUIT
ADULTS ONLY

Senno Knife returns with a new series of single-chapter stories. I can't really find anything to distinguish them from the similar stories he wrote in *Sepia*, since the style and themes in that–elaborate outfits (the man obviously loves kimonos), longing, slightly forbidden and/or supernatural love, historical/traditional/nostalgic settings–are the same here. This is by no means a complaint, since he works well with these; just letting you know that if that's the sort of work of Knife's you've enjoyed in the past, then here's more of what you–and I–like. I can't think of many manga artists who will have a man meet and make love with a woman he knew back in his high school–in the music room of the now-abandoned and flooded school, right in the water. If you're seeking the gratuitous explicitness of titles published by MangErotica, then you'll be disappointed by Knife's tasteful self-censorship (no strips of editor's tape here). However, since I find his style to be classier than a lot of those, with almost no close-ups of areas, I find that it doesn't clash. I might add that the art transfer and touch-up quality is nice, sharp and solid in these three comics. Recommended. **Eden** Vol. 1 #1-3 by Senno Knife, Sexy Fruit/I.C. Entertainment, B&W, 32 pg. ea., $2.95 US ea. ★★★☆


Will you swim with me, Shigeru?
Uh.. But I don't have a swim-suit.
That's fine.
Neither do I.

Ogenki Clinic

In the first graphic novel collection of Haruka Inui's hentai farce, various types of people turn up at Dr. Ogeguri and Nurse Tatase's titular clinic with all sorts of sexual problems. The treatment–always delivered with large doses of irreverence and larger body parts–is guaranteed to amuse the open-minded reader (open-minded as in, not made uptight by a chapter featuring a nun who seeks their help, or the Doctor being prone to the occasional snorkelling of transsexual sausage). Even more amusing is the fact that the results of the "treatment" are not always what they should be, or even easily predictable, which makes for good reading, and no one gets away without looking at least a bit silly. Not so amusing is the fact that rape is handled a bit too lightly a few times in this, but Inui thankfully cut that stuff out after this volume, and it's still not a frequent occurrence here. To top it all off, the artwork has been retouched (no more washout), and the sloppy translating that plagued I.C.'s titles in their early Ironcat days has been revised for this book. Recommended. **Ogenki Clinic Vol. 1: The Doctor Will Do You Now...** by Haruka Inui, Sexy Fruit/I.C. Entertainment, B&W, 216pg., $15.95 US. ★★★☆

OGENKI CLINIC
The Doctor will Do You Now...
Story & Art by HARUKA INUI

MANGA REVIEWS

Vampire Princess Miyu. Most people are familiar with Miyu from the OVAs (available from AnimEigo) and the TV series (available from TOKYOPOP). Both are very good, but I feel that this is the best way to experience this series. The first graphic novel laid the foundation and gave Miyu and Larva a few small adventures, but now the chapters are longer and more involved, and the third GN introduces the TV characters Reiha and Shiina. The soft style and stylistic devices typical of shoujo manga are used in a way that enhances rather than distracts from the mood of understated horror. Miyu herself is portrayed as warmer and more open than her animated versions, including telling Larva that she loves him, but she still sends chills down your psyche when she means business. Sometimes events and indications of which character is speaking can be difficult to figure out because of the aforementioned style touches, but then again, this adds to their re-readability, hence to the value of the books. They can also be enjoyed at mood level, similar to the Cocteau Twins' music. Well worth checking out. I might add that the covers of the graphic novels have been changed from the original Ironcat versions, with more colourful (but still beautiful and effective) pieces. **Vampire Princess Miyu Vol. II: Encounters** and **Vol. III: Deja Vu** by Toshiki Hirano and Narumi Kakinouchi; I.C. Entertainment, B&W, 216 pg., $15.99 U.S. each. ★★★☆

Vampire Princess Miyu
•Déjà vu•
美夕
吸血姫
平野俊貴/垣野内成美
III

REVIEWS: MANGA

by Martin Ouellette

BENKYO TAMAOKI
BLOOD
The Last Vampire 2002

Blood: The Last Vampire 2002, Vol. 1. Although not drawn by the anime's character designer Katsuya Terada (who just did the magnificent *Saiyukiden*), we must say that this (too short) manga keeps very close to the anime's feeling. As the title mentions, the story takes place in 2002, nearly forty years after the events that took place in the anime. David is now an old man and Saya's overseers are not as kind to her as the previous ones were. Moreover, she must also face a degradation of society around her and an enemy who knows her better than she knows herself. The art will not please everyone (Saya's eyes are so haunting, they gave me the creeps), but the excellent story should. Excellent! Viz Comics, Story & art by Benkyo Tamaoki, 204 pg., B&W, $15.95 US/ $26.50 CAN. ★★★★

DEMON BEAST INVASION
BOOK TWO
TOSHIO MAEDA
ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

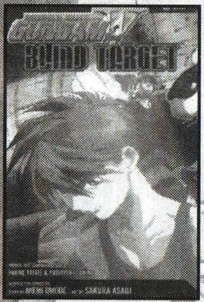
Demon Beast Invasion, Vol. 2. This is the last volume of the series, which has nearly exactly the same plot as *Legend Of The Overfiend*. As such, you get tentacles, demons, rapes, blood and more tentacles. We are NOT into this, but those who are will probably love this title... Manga-18, Story & art by Toshio Maeda, 236 pg., B&W, $16.95 US, 18+. ★★★

DRAGON BALL
Akira Toriyama
volume 1

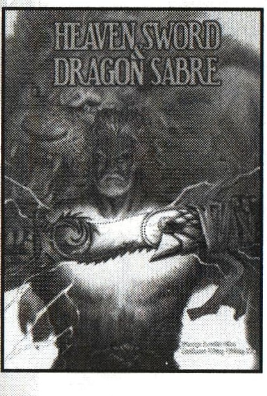
Dragon Ball, Vol. 1. We have all read this one about a hundred times. Goku is still as strong as an ox and dumb as a post, Bulma is still egotistical and mercenary, the Turtle Hermit is still a pervert and Yamcha is still afraid of girls. But you know what? It is still just as funny! Viz Comics/ Shonen Jump, Story & art by Akira Toriyama, 196 pg., B&W, $7.95 US/ $12.95 CAN. ★★★★

DRAGON BALL Z
Akira Toriyama
volume 1

Dragon Ball Z, Vol. 1. Just like the *Dragon Ball* #1, this is stuff we have read a hundred times. And we will always say the same thing about it; it may have been more popular than *DB*, but *DBZ* is just not as good. And it is sooo long... Viz Comics/ Shonen Jump, Story & art by Akira Toriyama, 156 pg., B&W, $7.95 US/ $12.95 CAN. ★★★



Gundam Wing: Blind Target GN. This very well drawn Graphic Novel presents a story that links the *Gundam Wing* TV series with the *Endless Waltz* OVA. The shojo style artwork of Sakura Asagi is superb and the story, although simple and not that original, does make a nice preface to *Endless Waltz. Wing* fans should like it. Viz Comics, Story by Akemi Omode, Art by Sakura Asagi, 156 pg., B&W, $9.95 US/ $16.50 CAN. ★★★☆



Heaven Sword & Dragon Sabre, Vol. 1. Although this comic features the standard Kung-fu story found in seemingly 99% of Chinese comics, the art in this one is superb (as good as Andy Seto's) and is highly enhanced by the truly incredible printing job. A good choice for Chinese comics fans. Comics One, Story by Louis Cha, Art by Wing Shing Ma, 132 pg., Full Color, $13.95 US. ★★★☆

Let's Stay Together Forever. Sometimes, the Japanese are a bit strange. How can anybody consider a Bon Jovi and Poison fan to be a Metalhead? A Metalhead, ladies and gentlemen, is a Black Sabbath and (early!) Metallica aficionado. And he does not wear hairspray, spandex and lingerie! Once again, Tomoko Taniguchi delivers a cute love story and illustrates it with her simple, but very efficient artwork. Shojo fans will love this (and real Metalheads will cringe!!). CPM Manga, Story & art by Tomoko Taniguchi, 192 pg., B&W, $15.95, 3+. ★★★☆

TALES OF LOVE, LOSS AND HAIRSPRAY!
LET'S STAY TOGETHER
FOREVER
TOMOKO TANIGUCHI

RECORD OF
LODOSS WAR
WELCOME to LODOSS ISLAND!

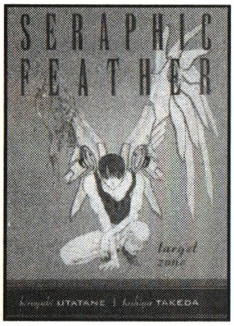
Lodoss War: Welcome To Lodoss Island!, Vol. 1. This book contains a bunch of little stories in the same style as the ones seen at the end of each *Chronicles Of The Heroic Knight* TV series episodes. As such , it is fun, but some of the humor needs translation and even then, is not that funny. However, *Lodoss* fans might like it, as it features SD *Lodoss* characters making morons out of themselves... CPM Comics, Story & art by Rei Hyakuyashiki, 100+ pg., B&W, $15.95, 13+. ★★★☆

Tony Wong
MEGA
DRAGON & TIGER
VOL. 01

Mega Dragon & Tiger, Vol. 1. By adding some ingredients from *Fist Of The North Star* to its plot, this typical Chinese Kung-Fu comic manages to take a step (albeit a very small one) out of the conventional. The art is nice, but nothing we have not seen more than a few times before (one of the characters looks exactly like Sean Connery!)... Comics One, Story by Tony Wong, Art by Hung-Ya Lin, 130+ pg., Full Color, $13.95 US. ★★★

ONEGAI
TEACHER
1

Please Teacher, Vol. 1. We have seen the animated version of this manga and we must say that we found the manga version much better. There is more humor, Mizuho is sexier and Minoru's wife is REALLY scary ("Don't mess with the hand"). Not a masterpiece by any means (we have seen this kind of story more than once), but still quite entertaining. Comics One, Story by Please!, Art by Shizuru Hayashiya, 212 pg., B&W, $9.95 US, 13+. ★★★☆



Seraphic Feather, Vol. 3. In this volume of Hiroyuki Utatane's sci-fi thriller, Sunao and Kei are together once again, we learn about Attim M'Zak's past and her link to Sunao, we meet Len (who will be an important character in the next volumes) and we understand a little more about Apep Heidemann's intentions. The art is superb, but the story is really hard to follow. Looks very nice, but not much else... Dark Horse Comics, Story by Toshiya Takeda, Art by Hiroyuki Utatane, 236 pg., B&W, $17.95 US. ★★★☆

THE ALL-NEW
TENCHI MUYO!
ALIEN NATION
HITOSHI OKUDA
Vol. 1

The All New Tenchi Muyo!, Vol. 1. What did mangaka Hitoshi Okuda do when he finished the *Tenchi Muyo!* manga series? He started another *Tenchi Muyo!* manga series, of course. This one is a follow up, only continuing and building upon what fans love about the legendary series. The art is very nice, but this is really only for *Tenchi* fans... Viz Comics, Story & art by Hitoshi Okuda, 180 pg., B&W, $8.95 US/ $14.95 CAN. ★★★☆

Urotsukidoji: Legend Of The Overfiend, Vol. 4. Toshio Maeda's classic hentai saga continues with all its charming features: violence, sex, perversion

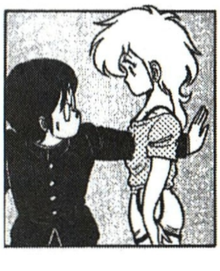
UROTSUKIDOJI
LEGEND OF THE OVERFIEND
TOSHIO MAEDA
ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

and abuse. The art is so-so, but artistic quality is not what fans of *Urotsukidoji* are after. However, the story is much more developed than in the anime. As we said, a classic, but not for the right reasons. Manga 18, Story & art by Toshio Maeda, 204 pg., B&W, $16.95 US, 18+. ★★★

UZUMAKI
by Junji Ito

Uzumaki, Vol. 1-2. Japanese horror is very different from North American horror. While it does contain gore, it also contains an ingredient that has been lacking in the Occidental material: fear. While the North American stuff concentrates on disgusting you with every kind of gory death it can find, the Japanese are able to both disgust you AND scare your pants off. Just think of the original version of *Ring.* Well, *Uzumaki* plays on the same ingredients *Ring* played with. While the story is different, the chilling feel you get from it is the same. The artwork, while simple, is very efficient and the effect Junji Ito was looking for is there. Bizarre, scary and quite intriguing. A must of REAL horror fans! Viz Comics, Story & art by Junji Ito, 200+ pg. ea., B&W, $15.95 US/ $26.50 CAN ea. ★★★★

You & Me. The creator of *Futaba-kun Change* returns with the story of Yuu Aimu, a transfer student who finds out that the only place he can afford to stay at is Yaninarisou, a rooming house with all mod cons and ghosts included. The lead poltergeist is the young, sexy and mischievous Mii, who latches on to him and proceeds to make his life...interesting. Add a supporting cast of oddball tenants, a landlady who wears a suit of armour, a couple of settings for the aforementioned weird denizens to wreak havoc in, some fan service spice, more wrestling!, and a pinch of fourth-wall humour and sit back with a drink and watch the explosions. Unlike *Futaba-kun*, things don't appear to be in danger of getting serious anytime soon in *You & Me*, but Aro could change that at any time. The numerous Japanese puns and cultural references are carefully explained in the margins without breaking up the flow (I.C. is one of the very few companies which do this). The first two issues have nice and solid art transfer quality, but the third goes back to the irritating washed-out smudge (that especially clashes with the sharp English text) which I.C. have been prone to in the past. Well, at least the English sound effects no longer look like they were drawn in with a marker as an afterthought. If you followed *Futaba-kun* and were bummed out when it finished, then you should get your hands on this. *You & Me* Vol. 1 #1-3 by Hiroshi Aro, I.C. Entertainment, B&W, 32 pg. ea., $2.95 US ea. [Neil Ellard] ★★★



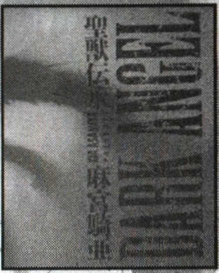
Weapons of the Gods
1
by Tony Wong

Weapons Of The Gods, Vol. 1. One of Tony Wong's two titles we review in this issue, *Weapons Of The Gods*' story is of a more conventional style than *Mega Dragon & Tiger* (even if the latter is also quite conventional). The art is nice, but this is nothing we haven't seen or read before... Comics One, Story by Tony Wong, Art by Ying-Hsian Lin, 132 pg., Full Color, $13.95 US. ★★★

FRENCH MANGA

COLLECTION
Shōnen
TURN A GUNDAM
CYBORG KUROCHAN
GETBACKERS
FULI CULI
YOUNG GTO!
Love Hina
Interview de Ken Akamatsu
vol. 2

Collection Shonen, Vol. 2. This French monthly anthology, by its choice of not-so-evident titles, is quite interesting. The first one is *Young GTO!*, which features the adventures of a young Eikichi Onizuka before his stint as teacher. The artwork may be not that great, but the story is just as hilarious and thought provoking as *GTO*'s. There is a very well drawn manga version of *Turn A Gundam*, as well as the rather bizarre manga version of Gainax's *FuriKuri* (titled "*Fuli Culi*" in French). Yuya Aoki and Rando Ayamine's popular *Getbackers*, the adventures of two young guys gifted with special powers and use them to do repossession jobs, is also part of the distribution. The last manga is the hilarious *Cyborg Kurochan*, the adventures of a little cyborg cat equipped with a lot a firepower, but lacking in both patience and self-restraint. All in all, if you can read French, *Collection Shonen* is something you really should get! Pika Edition, Various artists, 300+ pg., B&W, 6.95 Eur. / $12.95 Can. ★★★★



Dark Angel Box Set. This attractive Box Set contains all five volumes, in their original Japanese format, of Kia Asamiya's classic Fantasy saga, unfortunately interrupted in an EXTREMELY frustrating cliffhanger. Asamiya later attempted to make a second version of *Dark Angel*, with full color, redesigned characters and a retelling of the story, for the North American market, but it did not work very well... This Box Set is rather costly, but is well worth it if you can find it! Generation Comics, Story & art by Kia Asamiya, B&W. ★★★★

Hana Yori Dango
1
Glénat

C'EST AGRÉABLE, NON ? TU PEUX RENCONTRER BEAUCOUP DE GENS CÉLÈBRES !
ÇA N'A RIEN D'AGRÉABLE POUR MOI !
PEUT-ÊTRE...

Hana Yori Dango, Vol. 1. Yet another shojo manga (this style is really getting popular in both Europe and North America). This 32 volume-long series (argh!) recounts the adventures of a college girl who refuses to kowtow to a male clique of supposed hot shots and has them (quite unintentionally) all falling head over heels for her. Typical, but still interesting. Éditions Glénat, Story & art by Yoko Kamio, 220 pg., B&W. ★★★☆

La Vie En Rose, Vol. 1-2. This is one of Yun Kouga's, a quintessential shojo artist, most recent titles. While reading this, it becomes evident that Kouga has her style nailed down, both art and story wise. The drawings are simple and to the point, yet retain a sparse beauty reminiscent of Narumi Kakinouchi's style(*Vampire Miyu*). The short (8 to 10 pages), but very romantic stories recount the daily life of a very much in love couple composed of a manga artist and her husband. The kind of stuff your girlfriend would be happy to find in your collection. Vegetal Manga Shoten, Story & art by Yun Kouga, 140+ pg., B&W. ★★★★

by Miyako Matsuda

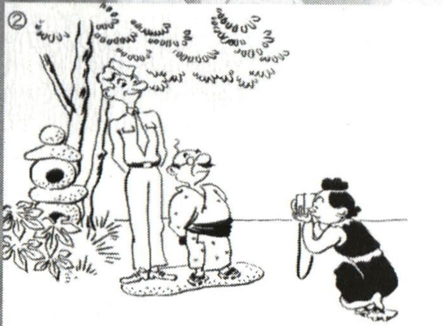
BOOK INTRODUCTION: THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SAZAE-SAN

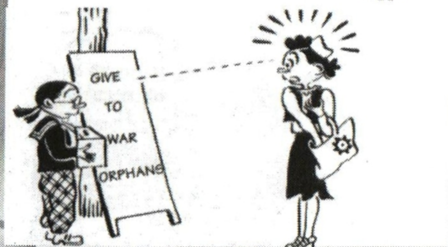
The Wonderful World of
Sazae-san
対訳
Vol. 1
サザエさん
Machiko Hasegawa
長谷川町子
For 50 Years, Japan's Best-loved Comic Strip

As Japanese anime and manga culture spreads all over the world today, you may wonder if they have popular newspaper strips in Japan as they do in the US. Yes, Japan does as well and if I was asked by someone about this I would certainly tell them that Japan's best loved comic since the end of WWII (over 50 years!) is *Sazae-san* (Mrs. Turbo) created by female cartoonist Machiko Hasegawa!

Back in the 60's, I used to watch the live action *Sazae-san* on TV with Chiemi Eri as Sazae. It's a bit like Chic Young's *Blondie* strip in the USA. It's certainly a mirror of post-war Japan and appeared from 1946 to 1975 in the *Asahi Shinbun* (Asahi Newspaper) everyday until that time. The artist passed away in 1992 at the age of 72, but her strips (in collected book format) are still sold and very much loved. The animated version, despite claims by *The Simpsons*, is the longest running animated series in the world, covering nearly 5 decades (it started airing in October 1969 and, after over 1700 episodes, is still airing today on Sundays at 6:30pm on Fuji TV!). Here, I would like to introduce readers to the English language version *Sazae-san* published by Kodansha in their bilingual format (translated by Jules and Dominic Young, and introduced by Frederik L. Schodt, the author of the only manga reference in English: *Manga! Manga! The World Of Japanese Comics*).

Despite the recession, Japan has the 2nd biggest economy in the world today and for the youth it is difficult to imagine that Japan was "ground zero" at the close of WWII in 1945. In fact, after the war, the gloomy years that followed were filled with rebuilding and difficult food shortages and awful living standards. In order to forget that, people flocked to the movie theatres for entertainment (ironically, the 40-50's were Japan's Golden Age of films) and this newspaper strip *Sazae-san*, with its warm humour, became an instant hit bringing laughter to these hard times. Manga, as well as film, is like a time machine enabling us to see the past and how people lived in that period. *Sazae-san* is a doorway into the everyday life of 1940's Japan.



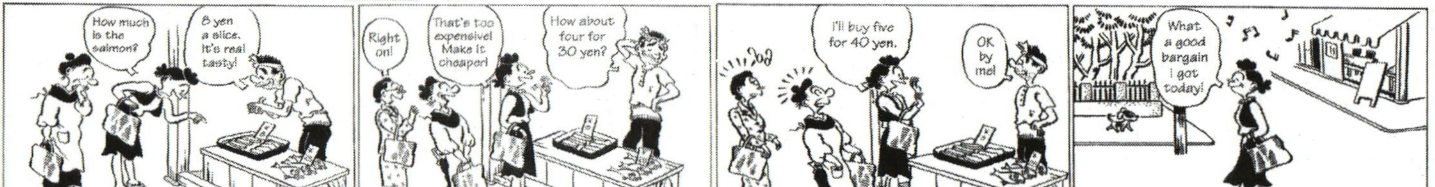


The main character of the strip, Mrs. Sazae Isono (means Mrs. Turbo, an edible shellfish), is a very ordinary housewife. The supporting characters are her parents (Fune & Namihei), brother (Katsuo) and sister (Wakame), husband (Matsuo Fuguta) and son (Tara). Four panels each day made the readers laugh and we can clearly see the reflection of the times as Japan went through the American Occupation (for seven years from 1945), food shortages and long ration lines, beggars and war orphans. Objectively speaking, it's not easy to deal with such gloomy subjects, but Hasegawa uses humour to take one away from these worries. And my! The price of food! A piece of salmon was ¥8 (about 5 cents). Sazae-san is not a big thinker (she's not good at arithmetic) and does a lot of idiotic things to make the readers laugh.

I still know the theme of the live action show by heart, like "Sazae-san, Sazae-san / What kind of person is she?/ She's such a beautiful lady and graceful". She was a reflection of the "every woman", not super intelligent or even sex appeal. She's ordinary, the housewife next door – but those are rare these days, eh? – with a white collar hubby and child. As dumb as she looks, she has a big heart and is portrayed as an independent person, not a simple obedient wife.

If you're curious about Japan's past, I highly recommend *Sazae-san* to you! It's remarkable that the most loved newspaper manga was created by a woman!

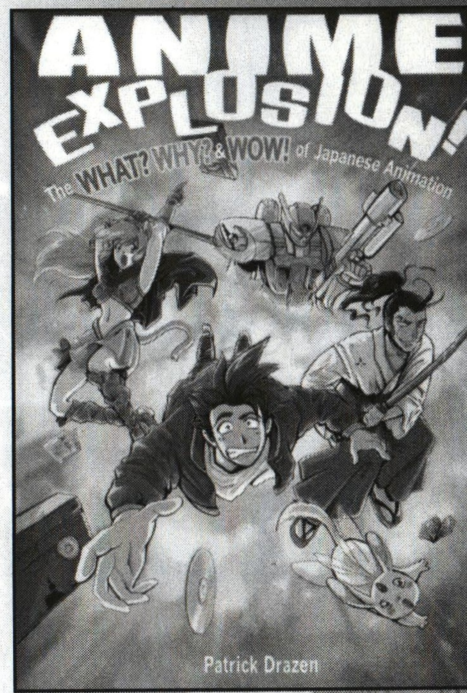
The Wonderful World Of Sazae-san, Vol. 1, by Machiko Hasegawa. Tokyo, Kodansha International, 1997. 168 pg. ISBN 4-7700-2075-9. $12 US.


How much is the salmon?
8 yen a slice. It's real tasty!
①
Right on!
That's too expensive! Make it cheaper!
How about four for 30 yen?
②
I'll buy five for 40 yen.
OK by me!
③
What a good bargain I got today!
④

Sazae-san © 1997 Kodansha International & Hasegawa Machiko Museum Foundation with the co-operation of C.A.L.. Manga available at Kinokuniya Bookstores or www.amazon.co.jp.

by Miyako Matsuda

ANIME EXPLOSION! THE WHAT? WHY? WOW! OF JAPANESE ANIMATION



Are you a newcomer to the wide world of anime? When one watches anime programmes from Japan, even with all the carefully done translations, "how much" can you truly understand? What are those weird creatures? How come the characters behave differently compared to their Western counterparts? Although anime shows are created to entertain the viewer, the culture behind the story is quite different — in other words, anime shows are truly a gateway to a totally different world! Patrick Drazen, who has published *Channels of Communication* and *The Journal of Popular Culture*, explains to you as clearly as possible the story backgrounds and character behaviour of anime shows.

We have introduced you to some books like *Permitted and Prohibited Desires* (by Anne Allison) and *Adult Manga* (by Sharon Kinsella) in previous issues of P.A that explain more about trends in sexuality based on an anthropological standpoint. This book is rather for fans who want to know more about the cultural context of Japanese animation. Anime has indeed become a part of our "popular" culture (it's no longer an underground or cult-like thing) and this is a wonderful opportunity for Westerners to learn more about Eastern culture. Drazen is interpreting anime shows through their themes and motifs — such as war (most shows are anti-war), religion, Eastern philosophy, ghost tales, folk tales, and beliefs in reincarnation — in 16 chapters explaining what the shows are talking about. In chapter 7, he also explains why homosexuality is tolerated in Japan, in its anime shows. Actually, I'd like to add that anime (as well as manga) exists for fans who want to escape from tedious reality to make life more exciting and homosexuality appeals to some, as a curiosity. Also, it's purely "supply and demand" — the creators just bring the audiences what they want. You may wonder, why is it so easy to do so in Japan?

Drazen has a chapter called "Faith-based: Christianity, Shinto and other religions in anime." When a person behaves a certain way, is it because of their religious beliefs? I like this line by Drazen, "The word belief is the key here. In Shinto, doctrine takes 2nd place behind the worship itself. Joseph Campbell tells the story of asking a Shinto priest about Shinto's belief system — the answer, we have no ideology. We have no theology. We dance." A native born Japanese person like myself knows exactly what he means. From ancient times, when most people were farmers, we all know that labour was hard and difficult and until recently people everywhere suffered from famine over the centuries. Therefore, people needed festivals and plays for entertainment in order to escape from the dreariness of reality and have tried to "laugh & dance" before doctrine. When I was a child, my parents dressed me in a fancy Shinto dancing girl costume and I was brought — with many other girls — to the Shinto shrine to dance.

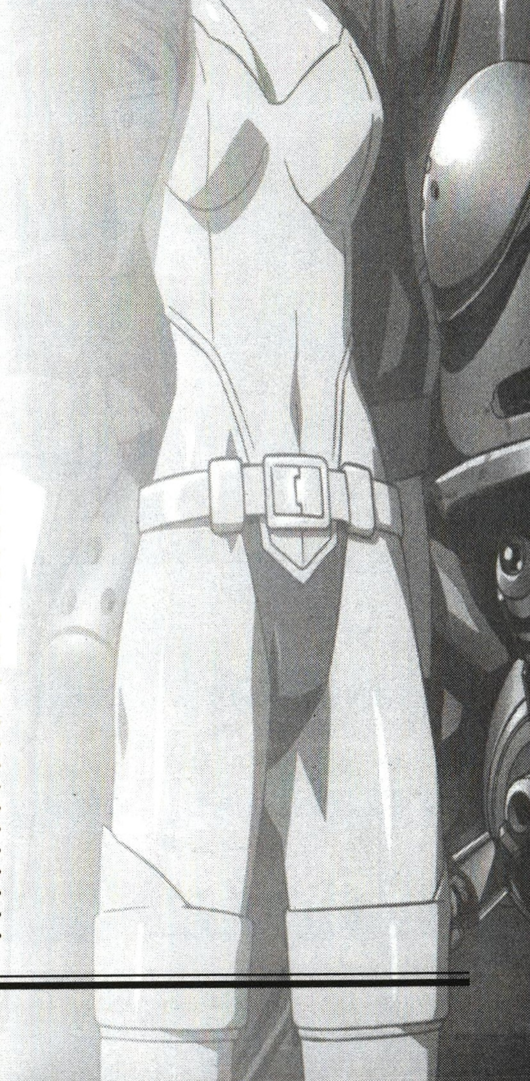
Although times have changed, Japanese people are essentially the same and just want to have fun and have a few good laughs. Therefore anime shows (and manga) are the perfect medium to escape from everyday life and labour. Please remember that Japanese people are the descendants of those who created the Shinto folktale of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and this folktale/myth is quite sexually open. (It might be a good opportunity for you to check this out).

Another important chapter is #15, "War is Stupid. War & Anti-war themes in Anime." And this line from *Final Fantasy*, "Violence never solved anything," really weighs heavily, as a large number of Japanese anime are anti-war with strong themes of pacifism. As I write this, the war on terrorism (against Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda) is still going on. Since 9/11, pacifism now sounds like a luxury or pipedream, but eventually we really have to strive for peace in the world for the sake of humanity. Anime like *Grave of the Fireflies* really displays the horror of war when innocent civilians are caught in the middle. Also on page 205, you can find out the real history of the battleship Yamato (the ancient name for Japan) and the rise and fall of imperialistic Japan during World War II.

Part 2 of this book introduces you to 13 selected films and directors, so if you're a real newcomer to anime culture, it would be better to start reading from here, because you really have to be an educated (and well-read) person to digest what Drazen is writing about in the Part 1. Drazen gives 3 little words of advice to all fans — young and old. Watch, Read, Surf! In order to understand what's really happening in anime, viewers have to read classic literature, and know about ecology, theology, mythology, and folk tales, because a lot of shows are created for adult audiences and when you understand more, you'll truly enjoy the shows more. Are these popular shows here to stay? It's all up to you fans! I wonder, will anime be around 50 years from now? I'm sure it will.

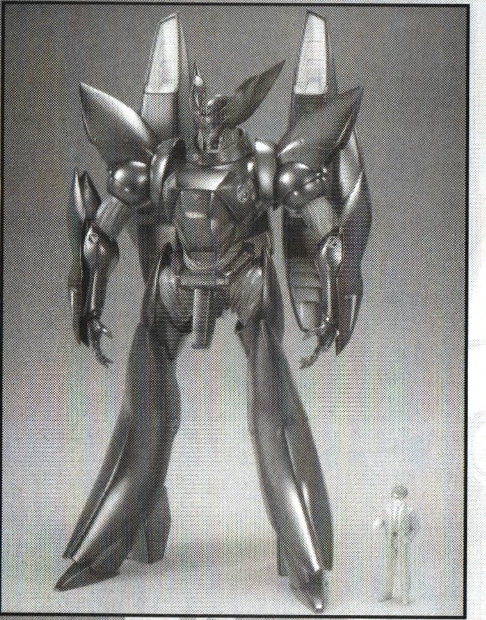
Although Drazen is writing about Japanese culture as seen through anime, the titles he picked are his favourites and his writing style is more casual – not formal and essay-like. If you're an anime fan and want company to share your interest, this book will make an excellent companion!

Anime Explosion! The WHAT? WHY? WOW! Of Japanese Animation. By Patrick Drazen. Berkley, Stone Bridge Press, 2003. 369 pg. ISBN 1-880656-72-8. $18.95 US.



by Martin Ouellette

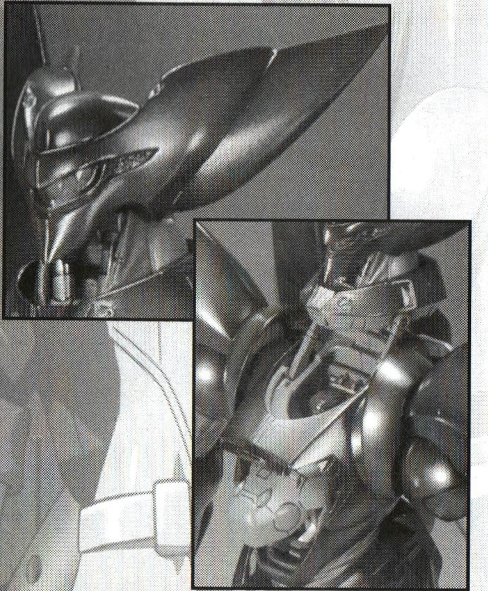
PATLABOR S.E.J. TYPE J9 "GRIFFON" LABOR 1/35 MASTER GRADE BY BANDAI



Schaft Enterprise TYPE-J9
GRIFFON
-AQUA TYPE-
P21C
PATLABOR 2001
MG
BANDAI

When the *Patlabor* series was first conceived, Noa Izumi's AV-98 Ingram, nicknamed "Alphonse", was its hero mecha. However, to create a real hero, you need an enemy worthy of him. In the case of "Alphonse", it took some time before this worthy enemy arrived: Schaft Enterprise Japan's Type-J9 Griffon. The jet black, demonic-looking Griffon first appeared at the end of the TV series and instantly became a fan favorite, even beating "Alphonse" in popularity!

Conceived by the Japanese division of Schaft Enterprises, the J9 Griffon was a test type labor using an extremely advanced Labor technology : the ASURA System (however, the Griffon is NOT equipped with stealth technology). While the Ingram's Shinohara Operating System was only a complicated computer program, S.E.J.'s ASURA had two components; the ASURA program itself and its virtual cockpit. The Griffon's visual and manipulator systems were controlled by the pilot via an virtual reality helmet and a "waldo" system. This superior control system, linked to the high performance ASURA OS, gave the Griffon a reaction time and maneuverability superior to any Labor, even the Ingram. There were two Griffon prototypes, both piloted by a young video game genius named Bud. The first one, seen in the TV series, was equipped with a Flight Pack. This is the one *Patlabor* fans think about when the name "Griffon" is mentioned. The second one, dubbed the "Aqua Type" and seen in the second OVA series, was equipped with an underwater propulsion system. This is the first one Bandai decided to release as a 1/35 Master Grade kit. After all, if they had released the one with the Flight Pack first, they would not have been able to sell this one!



This kit was a little disappointing in its simplicity. How could a model this big (its head height is 21 cm, 25 cm with the "Aqua" pack), and a Master Grade at that, have less that 220 parts, screws included? The same thing had happened with the Ingram, but we had expected more from the Griffon, if only because it is bigger and looks more complicated. However, this was only a slight deception, the kit proving to be more complex than we had first thought (this had also happened with the Ingram). Beautifully molded in a very shiny jet black (it looks turtle waxed!), dark gray, orange-yellow and clear orange and red, the kit was RELATIVELY easy to assemble.

Relatively, not because of the design of the parts themselves, for this is a very well engineered model, but because of the materials they are made of. The superb finish on the jet black parts is easily scratched and the X-acto marks left on the points where they were attached to the runners not easily camouflaged. By the way, why was the upper chest plate molded in such a way that it left a huge mold line straight in the middle? The entire internal structure, like the Ingram's, is made of ABS, assembled with CHEAP AS HELL screws, which get hopelessly damaged the second the screwdriver touches them (yes, we do follow the instructions; "please use a screwdriver of the right size"). This renders assembly very hard at some points, as you need to apply a surprising amount of torque to tighten the screw, hence damaging it, all this while trying to hold together small parts made of slippery ABS. Fun, in a maddening sort of way. The soft rubber covers do a very nice job, but, once again, the X-acto marks left after cutting them off their runner are nearly impossible to remove.

Still, this kit has many more perks than quirks. The molding, except for that upper chest plate problem, is superb and the assembly is as solid as a rock. Like most MG kits, the cockpit hatch opens and the one on the Griffon MG opens exactly as it does it the animation: the whole neck/head assembly lifts up and out of the way. Very nicely done! Of course, the two front chest plates can be removed to have a better view of the cockpit (in the animation, they have to be ejected). The arms can be removed much the same way as in the animation and the legs, back pack and "Aqua" system all have interior details. A good idea was to have the soles of the feet molded in soft rubber so that the completed kit does not slip (an idea kept on the *G-Gundam* MGs). As for goodies, the Griffon MG does not have much: two sets of hands (fists, open), as well as a "thumbs up" right hand, a sheet of dry-transfer decals, and two 1/35 figures. But since it only costs ¥3,500, we cannot ask for much in this area... All in all, the 1/35 MG Griffon is a very good kit, which looks awesome when completed. However, we could hardly recommend it to a beginner. (Cat. #0108830)

Complexity: **Intermediate** Molding: **4.5** Fit: **4.5** Posability: **4** Accuracy: **5** Average: **4.5**

Models provided by HobbyLink Japan (www.hlj.com). Special thanks to Scott T. Hards.

GAT-X105 AILE STRIKE GUNDAM 1/100 BY BANDAI

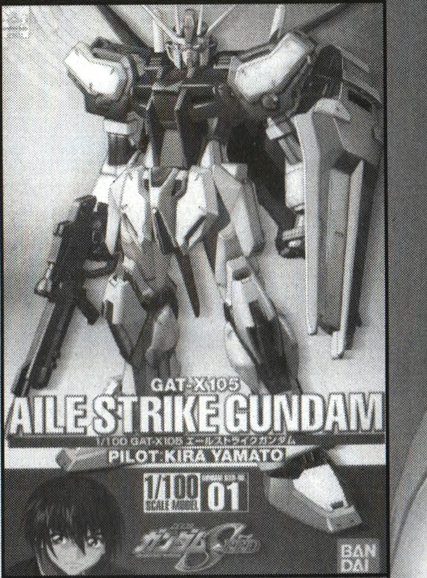
Gundam Seed, the latest opus of the legendary saga, must be a success if success is to be judged by the truly astonishing number of model kits Bandai has been releasing in the last six months or so. Actually, the series' success is not that surprising to us, for we have seen more than a few episodes and we must say that it IS very good. The story takes place in the year 70 of the Cosmic Era (yet another alternate timeline!), when the Heliopolis colony is attacked by ZAFT (read "Jion") who want to steal the five Gundam prototypes of the Earth Federation. The operation is only partly successful, as the Strike Gundam escapes ZAFT's clutches, thanks to a 16 year-old named Kira Yamato. The battles that follow are tough for Kira, as his childhood best friend, Asran, is part of the ZAFT MS Corps! This sounds really "cliché", but trust us, it is good stuff! And the animation is superb. By the way, in the *Gundam Seed* universe, the Mobile Suits have, at last, come back to their original size and weight: around 18 meters and 60+ tons.

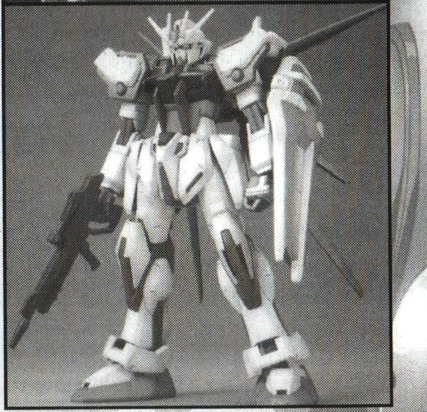
For this series, Bandai pulled out all the stops and released an impressive quantity of models. There is a 1/144 series similar to the FG (First Grade) series, an HG 1/144 series, a 1/100 series and even a 1/60 series composed of two Strike Gundams (including one with all the optional packs!). In this issue, we review the first kit of the *Gundam Seed* 1/100 line, the GAT-X105 Aile Strike Gundam (the GAT stands for Gressorial Armament Tactical), which could be considered the standard version of the Strike (much like the early 1990's Gundam F-90, the Strike Gundam is modular and can be used in a variety of missions just by changing some parts). And striking the Strike is!

While this is by no means a Master Grade kit (although I am quite sure that we will see a MG Strike at one time or another), we were quite surprised by the quality of this kit. The 180 parts (including the polycaps), in off-white, dark gray, red, black, blue, yellow and clear pink (for the Beam Saber blades), are perfectly molded and the assembly is extremely easy. The parts breakdown was done in such a way as to make painting as easy as possible and there are a lot of details in there (the hands are quite nicely done, for once...). One of the most surprising thing about this kit is the absence of ABS parts, which seem to have become a standard for Bandai. Thank God, there are no screws either! However, the completed model is quite sturdy and its flexibility, especially at the leg level, is excellent. The 1/100 Aile Strike comes with its Aile (Wing in French) Pack, which is used for both space and atmospheric flight (and is the only one that makes the Strike look like a standard Gundam), two Beam Sabers, four Schneider Armor Knives (two open, two closed, the latter being stored in the hip containers), its Beam Rifle and its shield. There is also a 1/20 scale Kira Yamato figure.

Another surprising thing about this kit is that it looks much better than the original line art by Kunio Okawara (who has been designing MSs for the last 25 years!). It is thinner and looks much more athletic. In short, we are quite impressed by this very straightforward kit and hope that Bandai will continue in this direction. Gimmicky kits are fun, but often prove to be not much more than costly and time consuming action figures. For only ¥2,000, you get both a lot of fun and a really good-looking Gundam... (Cat. 0114211)

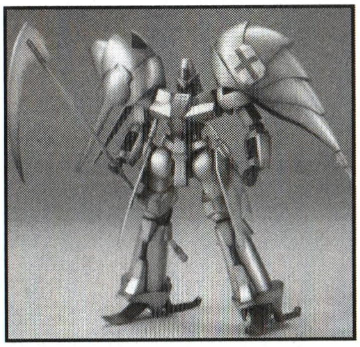
Complexity: **Beginner** Molding: **4.5** Fit: **5** Posability: **4.5** Accuracy: **5.5** Average: **4.5**





A-CLASS HEAVY METAL AUG HG 1/144 BY BANDAI

L-GAIM SERIES
03
1/144 SCALE
AUG
A-class HEAVY METAL
HG
HEAVY METAL
1/144 HG オージ
HG NEW PRODUCE VERSION
BANDAI



Now, this is the way the *Heavy Metal L-Gaim* model kits should have been done the first time! However, in those days, they did not have the molding technology to reproduce Mamoru Nagano's superb mecha designs as faithfully as they can today. About two years ago, Bandai decided to release a new series of 1/144 Heavy Metals. The L-Gaim was, of course, the first, followed by the A-Toll (which had never seen a plastic injection release). The third kit is Oldma Poseidal's Original Aug (which could be considered the ancestor of Nagano's legendary Knight Of Gold from *FSS*), as seen at the end of the L-Gaim TV series.

Although we are not a fan of the Aug, we must say that this kit is more than nice. Composed of 168 parts (including polycaps), it is molded in a rather strange metallic orange-yellow (probably supposed to reproduce gold...), very dark blue-gray, metallic gray and red (the cockpit hatch). The molding is perfect, the assembly quite easy and there are a lot of fine details. The technique used to reproduce the shoulders' interior panels is interesting: the soft plastic panels are finely grooved so they can be bent to fit inside the shoulders without loosing their details. Very astute! The entire interior structure is in ABS, so the completed kit is quite solid. The two important features of the Aug are present: the movable calf panels and the swiveling shoulders.

All in all, if you do not have the money to buy *FSS* kits, then Bandai's new 1/144 *Heavy Metal L-Gaim* series is a good choice, with the easily built Aug costing only ¥1,800 (¥600 less than Wave's flawed 1/144 plastic injection Knight Of Gold). Only time will tell if Bandai will continue the series with an A.Shura Temple or a Calvary Temple... (Cat. #0111901)

Complexity: **Beginner** Molding: **4.5** Fit: **4.5** Posability: **4.5** Accuracy: **5** Average: **4.5**

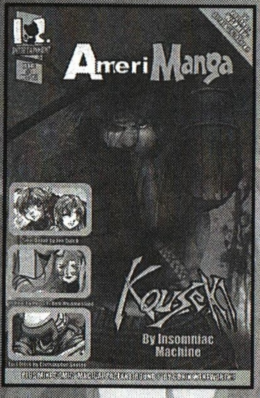
Your Friends in Japan Are Ready And Waiting To Send You All The Latest

HobbyLink Japan

http://www.hlj.com/

Comics

AmeriManga



As the title says, this new anthology series showcases American comic artists whose styles are influenced by manga. Insomniac Machine's *Kouseki* is a gory historical fantasy with highly detailed art and shading, with the old tried-and-true prophecy fulfillment and a baby being kidnapped to become the Chosen One. *Soul Union* by Jen Quick is a medieval fantasy with human and anthropomorphic characters (plus one angel) drawn in a busy, thick-lined style that is closer to fan art than manga. Beth Westmoreland's *Without Darkness* is a story about a Scottish woman (a disgruntled mercenary by day and a drunkard by night) who ends up befriending a French waitress at the bar she's getting pickled at. This is probably the least manga-looking story in the book, and the silly rough sketches used as an *omake* ruin any effect the main story had. Ms. Westmoreland also inks Chris Seaton's *Last Ditch*, a semi-futuristic war story which is ambitious, but the art style is sorely underdeveloped. The bonus mini-comic *Magical Pageant: Round 1* by Corin Wentworth manages to both take care of the cuteness quotient in only four pages and poke fun at it at the same time; neat trick, and the story I like the most in this. The bonus poster of characters from *Warmth* by Fred Gallagher (*Megatokyo*) is also very nice; it's a shame that we have to wait until issue #4 for the first chapter. I wish everybody involved with this well, and it's likely that the editor didn't want to fill this with totally slavish manga cloning, but most of this mag just didn't click with me. Check it out for yourself, at least; some part of it might be just what you're looking for. *AmeriManga* #1; I.C. Entertainment, B&W, 112 pg., $7.99 US. [Neil Ellard] ★★☆

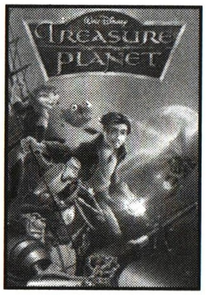
Megatokyo

メガトーキョー
megatokyo

One of the greatest things about the Internet is that it provides an avenue for all sorts of artists who just want to get their creations out there for people to enjoy, including cartoonists. While quality does range widely, the more distinctive strips gather large audiences which include other web cartoonists, who promote their works in turn by linking to their sites. Community rules in this area, and *Megatokyo* is one of its distinguished residents. So distinguished that I.C. Entertainment (formerly Studio Ironcat) decided to lay the first year of it ("Chapter 0") down on paper and bind it so that you can read it away from your computer. We follow anime/manga/dating sim game fiend and straight man Piro and the excitable video game addict/l33tspeaker Largo as they decide to go to Japan on a whim. Okay, not quite a whim, but anyway... they blow all their money on cool stuff and end up stuck there, sponging off their suffering friend Dom and trying to find work so they can raise money for plane tickets home (and I think it's safe to tell you that they're still there at the time of writing). *Megatokyo* is created by hip geeks for hip geeks, but it's guaranteed to have at least a little something for everybody to enjoy – even if it is just laughing at the lovable losers who head the cast. The art style is almost entirely pencilled (only a few tiny computer tricks), created in a cute manga style which pleases my eyes more than most westerners' attempts, and strips which don't fill the whole page (most of this book) include commentary which gives a close look behind the scenes. And the best part of it all is that you can sample it for free before buying it (www.megatokyo.com) – and I recommend that you do both, since Fred carefully retouched the art for this book, and there are a few pieces which aren't on the site. Awaiting the forthcoming volumes. *Megatokyo Vol. 1: Relax, We Understand J00* by Fred Gallagher and Rodney Caston; I.C. Entertainment, B&W, 144 pg., $9.99 US. [Neil Ellard] ★★★☆

Animation

Treasure Planet



Yet another Disney movie that could have been much more, but missed the target. However, it had some VERY good basics: there is only one song, the Captain Amelia character (voiced by Emma Thompson) is wonderful, the animation and designs are superb and the story does not make many concessions toward the kiddy stuff (people even die in there!). However, many characters do not have as much charisma as they should (Silver and Jim), Amelia should have been used more and the ending is pretty rushed (but the "jet board" scene is quite something). Not the best Disney movie (*Lilo & Stitch* was much better), but *Treasure Planet* is still very entertaining. [MO]

Buena Vista, Cat. #28152, multilingual, 95 min., $29.99 US ($36.99 Can), G.

Designs:	Animation:	Soundtrack:	Story:	Translation:	Average:
4	4.5	3	3.5	4	4

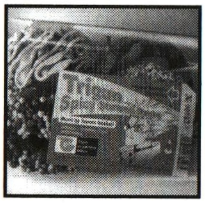
CD Soundtracks

Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040 Official Soundtrack

Like the first *BGC*, one of *BGC Tokyo 2040*'s greatest strength is its music. While the first *BGC* OVA's music went from typical mid-1980's hard rockers to soft ballads, *Tokyo 2040*'s soundtrack prefers what could be called "Cyberfunk", a mix of heavy-bassed Funk and techno that will send your pets running for their lives. This is not stuff to be listened on a cheap "boom box". This stuff needs POWER and only then will you truly appreciate it. Different from the first series' music, but just as good! [MO] ★★★★

Tokyopop, Cat. #TPCD 0207-2, 20 tracks, 47:14 min., $14.98.

Trigun "Spicy Stewed Donut" Official Soundtrack

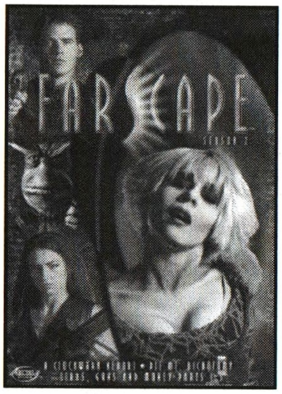


From what we could understand from the packaging, this soundtrack is something that was especially concocted by the Japanese as an overseas edition. As such, it mixes tracks from two CDs. This is pretty bizarre music (sometimes, I even wondered if it was supposed to be music!), in keeping with Vash's just as bizarre personality and eclectic tastes. Both opening and closing tracks of the anime, titled "H.T." and "Kaze-wa Mirai-ni Fuku", are included. Good, but not for everyone... [MO] ★★★☆

Tokyopop, Cat. #TPCD 0208-2, 15 tracks, 49:53 min., $14.98.

Live-Action (Non-Japanese)

Farscape Season 2, Vol. 3-5



Although I have never been much of a fan of live-action science-fiction, I must say that I liked *Farscape*. The reason why is simple: it does not try to take itself seriously. Each of these two-DVD sets contains five episodes (except vol. 4, which has four) and recounts the dramatic, yet often comedic (thanks to Crichton), adventures of the unorthodox crew of a living spaceship. The special effects are simple, but it is really the story and the character development that makes *Farscape* so fun to watch. [MO] ★★★★

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DFS-203/4/5, Dubbed, 260 min. ea. (204: 210 min.), $39.98 ea., PG (Violence, Mature Subjects).

STAND ALONE COMPLEX: OVERVIEW

The TV version of *Ghost in the Shell* (*Kokaku Kidotai* in Japanese — and simply *Kokaku* (the hard-shell) among hard-core fans) finally arrived in Oct 2002! The 26-episode series airs twice a month, with an irregular schedule, on SkyPerfectTV's PPV channel Animax. With the full support of original creator Shirow Masamune, this anime won't disappoint you — in fact, you'll be totally hooked! A must see show that I'd recommend to anyone. If you haven't seen the movie or read the manga, it would help to take a look at these in order to understand the TV series a bit better (it's the same characters, after all), but you may not have too many problems if you dive straight in without doing so. Director Kenji Kamiyama, along with four other writers, is bringing a new dimension to the standard police detective drama adding a techno-cyberpunk flavour. Not only is this a very high quality show visually (HD full-digital screen to satisfy even the most hard-core fan!), but it is also full of exciting, intelligent storytelling. You can see that the writers really put forward their best efforts to attract viewers.

The story is set in a future Tokyo populated with high-tech doohickeys, and lots of cyborgs and androids. Fans of *Ghost in the Shell* find out immediately that this story is quite different from the manga or games. It's a kind of parallel world created for the TV series, closer to what was already developped for the movie. The manga is funny and set in a fictitious future (lots of made-up names) where Section 9 is an international anti-terrorist unit. The TV series' setting feels less like a militaristic anti-terrorist outfit and more like a special police force dealing with cyber crimes. It is more serious and more realistic. Nevertheless, like the movie, which was based mostly on the manga, the TV series is using bits and pieces of the manga's story. We could consider the TV series as a prequel to the movie, whereas the new manga, *Man-Machine Interface*, is the direct sequel of the original manga.

So what do they mean by "Stand Alone Complex"? It simply means that the series is mostly made of stand alone episodes (self contained stories), with a few more complex episodes (the "Laughing Man" story arc). Episode 6 also provides another explanation: it refers to the fact that Laughing Man's imitators are independant copycats, created without an original. To me it seems that Production I.G.'s writers want to make the point that "It's extremely difficult and almost impossible today to stand alone in this complex society of computers and networks." Each episode throws enormous amounts of technical information and detail about computers, science and politics for the viewer to digest. At first, for an average nincompoop like myself, the contents of this show can be too much, but with a bit of patience it's certainly educational. I think, in a way, it's charming to see so much information on technology. Compared to ordinary anime shows, the amount of dialogue and information is quite huge.

You really have to sit down and watch this TV show over and over again to catch the small details and to understand better. In this respect it shares much in common with its source, the manga. On the other hand, despite all this, the show can also be watched as an intelligent police/detective drama. The viewers can try to solve crimes with Section 9 members and get great satisfaction to see the conclusion of each cyber-crimes case. But don't think that the show is as slow paced as the film — there is still a lot of action!

The characters seem to be like normal humans, but in fact most of them are cyborgs (with some sort of cybernetic enhancement). I wonder if, in the near future, when humans begin to replace body-parts to improve their lives and live more comfortably, we'll have different kinds of crimes? It's the same type of premise as in *Patlabor*: if technology takes us there, the nature of crime will change. Of course we're all human, but how in the world can we live and "stand" with our own personalities in this extremely complex society of the future? In this show, all criminals are making statements of a kind (politically, individually or otherwise).

This is certainly a strong series evolved from speculative fiction, with excellent (and exotic Russian sounding) music by Yoko Kannno (*Cowboy Bebop*, *Escaflowne* and *Macross Plus*) and viewers will enjoy this full-action crime fighting anime! In my opinion, this show clearly shows one thing: good writing and storytelling make a great difference! There are many shows with high quality visuals, but with weak stories. *Ghost in the Shell* is one of the best shows to come down the road in the last few years and hearkens back to a period where stories and strong characters were the main focus. I'd like to send out enthusiastic applause to the creators of this show!

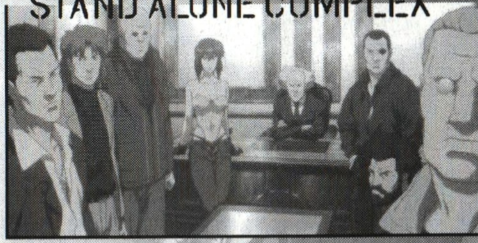
Despite its high quality animation and intelligent story, the show has a few annoying details: the original opening is much better than the 3D one which starts with episode 3 and there are some technical impossibilities (like the cloaking devices which are not consistent with those in the movie).

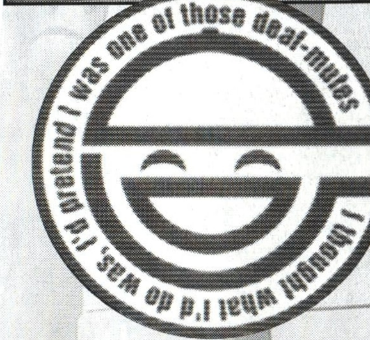
The series is available in Japan on R2 DVDs (9 vol., up to ep. 18, BCBA-1392~99, ± 62 min. ea., ¥6000 ea) and has been acquired by Bandai for a North American release in 2004. A new movie, *Innocence*, directed by Mamoru Oshii, is in production at Production I.G., and will be released in Japan in Spring 2004.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4.5** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **5** Translation: **—** Average: **4.5**

⚠ SPOILERS AHEAD ⚠

攻殻機動隊
STAND ALONE COMPLEX

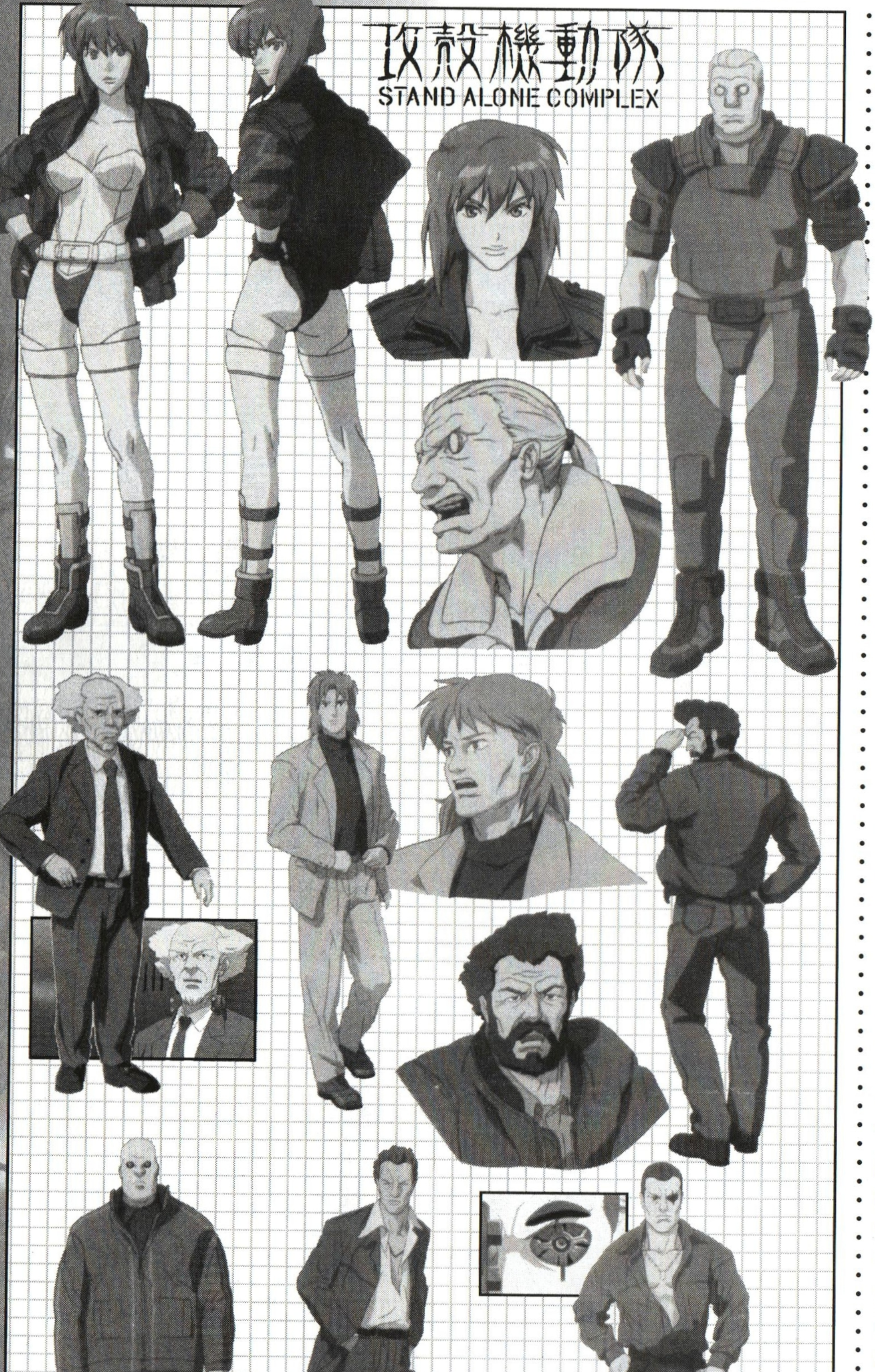



I thought what I'd do was, I'd pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes

Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex © Shirow Masamune • Production I.G. / Kodansha • *Kokaku Kidotai* Production Committee. Video provided by Luciano.

by Miyako Matsuda

STAND ALONE COMPLEX: CHARACTER PROFILES



Public Peace, Section 9

Motoko Kusanagi (Major)

Leader and only woman of Section 9, she's a total cyborg, except for her brain and spinal cord. In the TV series, she's about 10 years younger than in the movie. She is the best detective and has great cyber skills (hacking, code breaking, network surveillance)! Height: 168 cm. Voice Actor: Atsuko Tanaka.

Batou

Second in command, he does everything possible to help the Major. He is very strong and has enhanced vision. His humor and calm demeanor is a great help for Motoko. Height: 189 cm. VA: Akio Ôtsuka.

Mr. Daisuke Aramaki (Chief)

He established Section 9 in order to fight cyber terrorism. He's a very experienced man that everyone can depend upon. His nickname is the "old monkey". He has minimal cyber-enhancement. Height: 153 cm. VA: Osamu Saka.

Togusa

The members with the least cybernetic enhancements. Being totally human, he is not physically strong, but he's an excellent investigator (and that's why Kusanagi had him transfered fom police HQ). The only member with a family. Height: 176.5 cm. VA: Kôichi Yamadera.

Ishikawa

He is the Section 9 member who takes care of the back-up operation, using the cyber network to gather information. His skills are hacking, data retrieval, systems operation. He was previously in the army with Kusanagi. Height: 180 cm. VA: Yutaka Nakano.

Bôma (Borma)

Physically the biggest member of Section 9. Despite his look, he is intelligent and a skilled hacker. He operates with Pazu most of the times. Height: 198.9 cm. VA: Taro Yamaguchi.

Pazu (Paz)

He looks like a bad guy and loves smoking. He is often paired with Bôma, whom he considers his best friend and often plays billards with. Height: 177 cm.

Saito

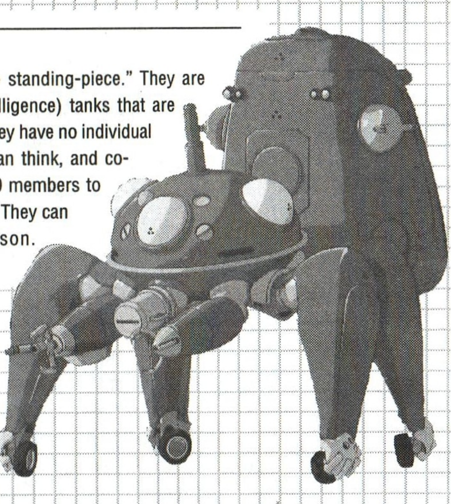
He is the team's sharp shooter and the second least cyber-enhanced member (only the left arm and his "Hawk Eye" which provide a satellite link and perfect targeting). He is also very good at poker. Height: 172. VA: Toru Ohkawa.

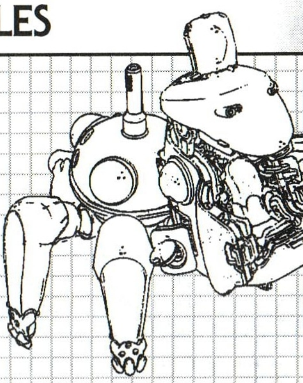
Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex © Shirow Masamune • Production I.G. / Kodansha • *Kokaku Kidotai* Production Committee. Info: www.productionig.com

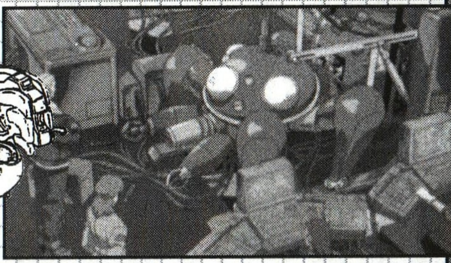
STAND ALONE COMPLEX: MECHA FILES

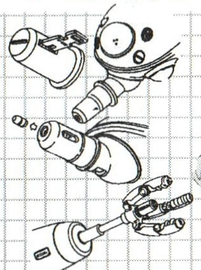
Tachikoma

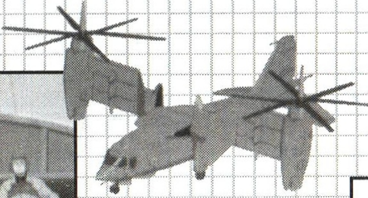
Their name mean "the standing-piece." They are small AI (artificial intelligence) tanks that are owned by Section 9. They have no individual personality, but they can think, and co-ordinate with Section 9 members to fight against criminals. They can also carry one person.
VA: Sakiko Tamagawa.

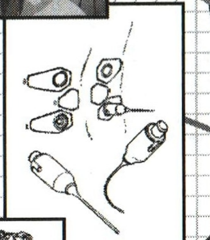


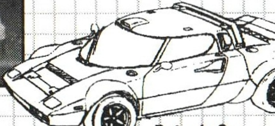




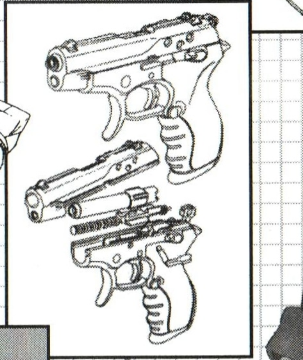


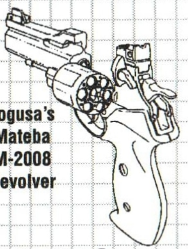




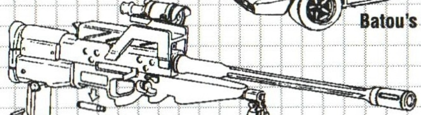


Batou's Car

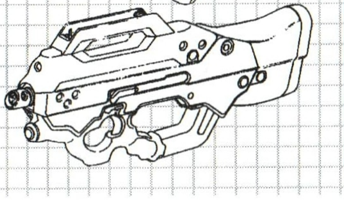


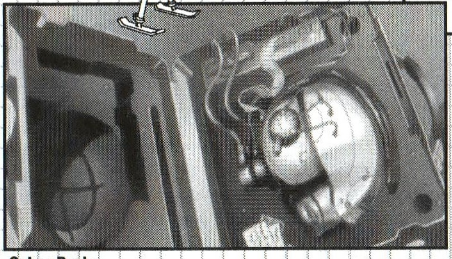


Togusa's Mateba M-2008 Revolver

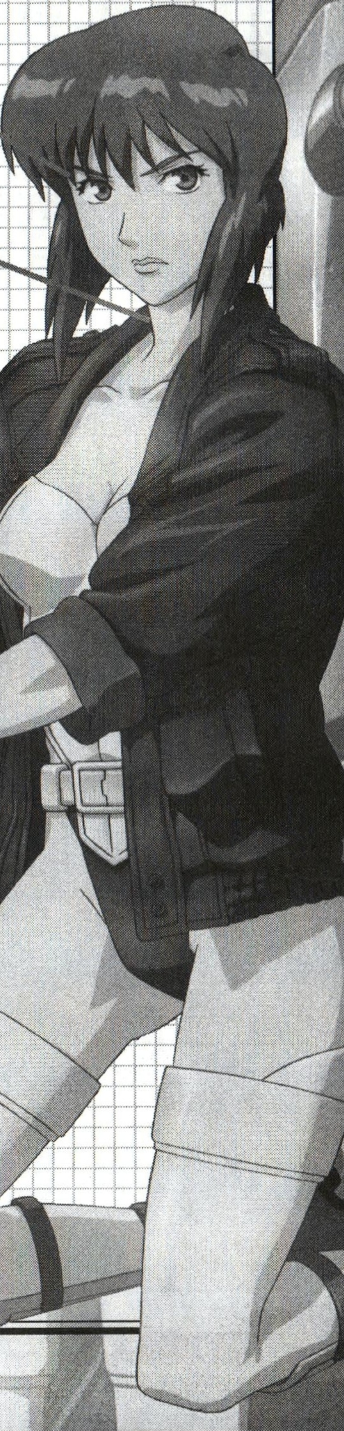


Sniper Gun





Cyber Brain



Staff

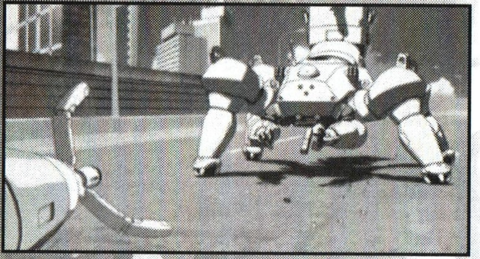
Director: Kamiyama Kenji (*Mini-Pato*); **Original Story**: Shirow Masamune; **Planning**: Ishikawa Mitsuhasa, Watanabe Shigeru; **Character Designer**: Shimomura Kazu; **Mecha Designers**: Teraoka Kenji (*Sol Bianca Legacy*, *Arc The Lad*, *Generator Gawl*), Tsuneki Shinobu (*Awol*); **Art Director**: Takeda Shunsuke; **Art Composition (Background)**: Katô Hiroshi (*Evangelion*, *You're Under Arrest*); **Special Effects**: Murakami Masahiro; **Color Composition**: Katayama Yumiko; **Editing**: Uematsu Junichi; **Photo Director**: Tanaka Hiroshi; **3D Director**: Endow Makoto; **Sound Effects**: Wakabayashi Kazuhiro; **Music**: Kanno Yoko (*Macross Plus*, *Escaflowne*, *Cowboy Bebop*); **Music Producer**: Tada Toshiaki (Victor Entertainment); **Music Director**: Ishikawa Yoshimoto; **Producers**: Matsuka Yuichiro, Sukita Atsushi (Production I.G.). ***Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex*** © Shirow Masamune • Production I.G. / Kôdansha • *Kokaku Kidotai* Production Committee. Information: www.productionig.com.

SPOTLIGHT: STAND ALONE COMPLEX

by Miyako Matsuda

STAND ALONE COMPLEX: SHORT SYNOPSES

⚠ SPOILERS AHEAD ⚠



オンバ助けてください！
5.VN_REI
GARIX77

1. The Public Peace (Section-9)

An incident has happened — the foreign minister of Japan and some officials have been taken hostage by several android Geishas! Motoko and the Section 9 team get on the case to save the minister and investigate the scene in the Geisha House restaurant and succeed in rescuing them; but Aramaki, upon further investigation, unravels a larger conspiracy, concerning the Ichinose Report — important papers involving the military's top-secret information. Aramaki also discovers that the brain of the minister had been switched – a body hijacking! Can Section 9 prevent the important papers from leaving Japan?

2. The Proof of Recklessness (Testation)

The Ken-bishi company's trial of the prototype A.I. (artificial intelligence) tank suddenly turns into disaster when it runs out of control! The military is supposed to buy this model from Ken-bishi, therefore they don't wish to get involved too much with the incident. Then, Section 9 get the mission to stop this reckless tank, but the tank keeps going and going... to its creator's parents' place! How did this happen? The key is in the life and death of the engineer who created the tank!

3. The Modest Rebellion (Android and I)

One day, a very weird incident happens. One model of android have all committed suicide at the same time! After the investigation, Section 9 find out that the incident is caused by a virus and was created on purpose by a criminal. The strange thing is that there is a "protection-code" for that model as well. The criminal, who turns out to be the son of the Canadian Ambassador tries to escape from the police and go to Italy with his one and only beloved android! This criminal is a movie buff and his strange behaviour is based around the movies he has seen. Then, the android acts oddly. How can this happen? Can an android have a ghost (spirit) like a human?

4. Vision Laughs (Intercepter)

One rainy night, Togusa receives a phone call from an old friend with whom he used to work with at the police HQ. His name is Yamaguchi and he wants Togusa to meet him right away to talk about other police officers' weird activities. But on the way, he is killed in a car accident. At Yamaguchi's funeral, his wife passes on a message to Togusa. Togusa starts looking at photos that Yamaguchi wanted him to see. Then, he realizes "The photos are NOT taken by a camera!!" He solves the mystery and exposes the polices' illegal use of the device. Then the "Laughing Man" reappears!

5. The Beckoning Bird Sings (Decoy)

The special headquarters investigating "The Laughing man Case" have found an important suspect named Nanao to investigate. But Aramaki feels uneasy and thinks that the police are creating their own "show" to take the attention away from the truth. Meanwhile, Motoko Kusanagi ends up investigating the case that started 6 years earlier. Togusa and Batou enter Nanao's room before the detectives from the special force arrive, but he is already dead!

6. The Imitator Is Dancing (Meme)

The day where the police chief is supposed to be assassinated has arrived. The virus released by Nanao becomes active. Kusanagi somehow manages to stop the chaos with her men Saito and Pazu. But right after, more chaotic incidents happen and it has nothing to do with the virus. Is there any connection? What is the cause?

7. The Idol Worship (Idolater)

Marcelo, a drug kingpin, returns to visit Japan from South America almost every 5 months or so despite the fact that he's always reported on TV stirring South American politics. Section 9 are assigned to investigate this mysterious guy, who seems to have a strong connection with the Yakuza — the Japanese underground mafia. Unfortunately, the local prefectural police get involved and many officers get killed and things became really messy! Meanwhile, Motoko finally discovers the truth about Marcelo.

8. Those Who Are Blessed (Missing Hearts)

A medical mishap has happened. A person, who didn't agree to donate his heart, was operated on as a donor. Section 9 get the assignment to investigate the medical crime and uncover a group that sells organs. Major Motoko Kusanagi was a victim when she was younger and had her body switched to a cyborg, so she feels it's her obligation to catch the criminals! Medical students — one of them has the strong influence of his father — seem to be selling organs for money. Major Kusanagi wants to punish them real good!

9. The Man Who Lives Inside The Net (Chat! Chat! Chat!)

Inside the Net, many people who are very interested in the identity of the Laughing Man, discuss the topic and many people seem to have lots of inferences. The host of the chat room is called "Omba" and the discussion is beginning to really heat up! Meanwhile, Major Kusanagi is one of the members in the chat room and she notices that there is someone who's watching it all. She also feels something is wrong and with Omba's voice she ends up somewhere mysterious, but is forced to return! Is she getting close to solving the case?

10. The Best Suitable Day For Dense Forest Cruise (Jungle Cruise)

A cruel serial murderer is on the loose and the style of the murders is not only inhuman, but similar to an operation that Batou recognizes from his past. In order to clear his mind for his own sake, Batou decides to get seriously involved and try to find the murderer. He begins to operate his own way, but could it be a set up by the CIA?

Find more synopses in a future issue of the magazine!

Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex © Shirow Masamune • Production I.G. / Kodansha • *Kokaku Kidotai* Production Committee. Info: www.productionig.com

by Laura Powderham

ZETSUAI: Introduction

With the emergence of *shonen ai* (boy's love) series such as *Gravitation* and *Yami no Matsuei* from manga to anime in recent years it is safe to say that the prolific nature of *Yaoi* shall continue to contribute a unique section to Japanese popular media.

Key developers of this particular strand of *shoujo* manga such as Moto Hagio (*Juichigatsu no Gimunajiumu / November Gymnasium*) and Keiko Takemiya (*Kaze to Ki no Uta / Song of the Wind and Trees*) who developed both the concept of male character leads in girls manga and the prospect of romantic involvement between the protagonists with fine mixes of angst and loss set the stage for the future of *shonen ai* and contemporary writers such as Minami Ozaki.

Shonen ai has expanded its official boundaries in the unofficial capacity of fan written manga or *doujinshi*, which in the case of *shonen ai* involves rewritings of certain texts to produce a new spin on character's sexual orientation. Popular anime titles such as *Gundam Wing* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* have been exposed to this (generally) female reclaiming of an original text to produce a more romantic and often sexually explicit alternative. *Yaoi doujinshis* range from simple sexual involvement to sagas of interpretative angst and love between protagonists.

Ozaki is in fact partially responsible for the *Yaoi* influx as she was the author of one of the first *doujinshis* based on a mainstream title, *Captain Tsubasa*. The *doujinshi Dokusen Yoku,* which focuses upon the characters Ken and Kojiro, is a bold work which has clearly influenced her later narratives, character development and design.

Subsequently, Ozaki made the switch from fan circulation and became a professional, serializing her new work in *Margaret* Comics. To some, her later manga appears to be a continuation of the doujinshi, as her protagonists generally resemble her original conceptual reworking of the designs in *Captain Tsubasa*. Nevertheless her work has altered and continued to become iconic within *shonen ai. Zetsuai 1989* has become the contemporary interpretation of the star crossed lovers where love's exquisiteness is only measured by its emotional trauma. *Zetsuai* is in actuality an original term used by Ozaki to describe "desperate" or "endless" love. Despite the seemingly bleak premise for the characters within *Zetsuai 1989*, the series has been continued in a sequel, *Bronze: Zetsuai since 1989* and a number of erotic *doujinshis*.

Zetsuai 1989

Following the success of *Zetsuai* as a manga, it was later released as an OVA by Madhouse studios (*Perfect Blue*, *X*) in 1992. Featuring the direction of Takuji Endo (*Phantom Quest Corp*) and the storyboards of Yoshiaki Kawajiri, *Zetsuai* has attributes that are generally abundant within all of the studio's work such as complex character designs, backgrounds and special effects animation alongside atmospheric lighting.

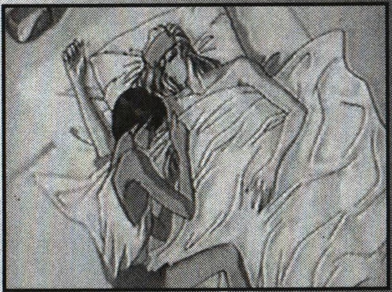
The story follows the interaction between two young men with unobtainable personalities and untouchable successes. Takuto Izumi is a young soccer prodigy with a tragic past, which subsequently prevents him from becoming a professional or from forming close relationships outside of his family. Koji Nanjo is a rock star with an icy disposition and a reckless nature. He spent his life consistently unmoved until the day he saw Izumi playing soccer in the fifth grade: "he had such power… a memory that will be with me all my life". A few years later Izumi, whilst jogging home finds Koji passed out drunk in the pouring rain…

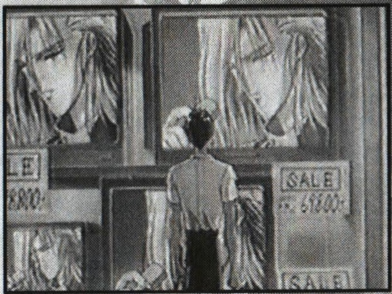
The story continues with Izumi caring for the sick Koji, who becomes curious about his new acquaintance without really knowing why.

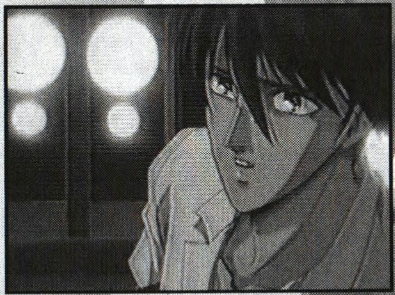
He begins to avoid his superstardom to pursue Izumi and becomes lost in obsession, delving into Izumi's past, which causes friction between the two men and is heightened by the intrusion of the media.

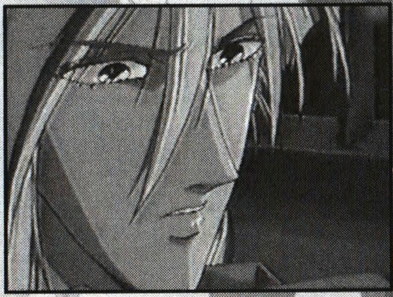
There is an interesting transition between the adaptation of manga to anime via a communications of unspoken fact. When Izumi discovers the identity of Koji in the anime it is through televisions in a shop window; in the manga however, it is posters of Koji plastered all over his sister's wall. It would seem that to suit the themes of animation, identities that were once discovered by image and writing are then translated to moving media. A similar change can be found in the *Gravitation* TV series when compared to its original manga counterpart.

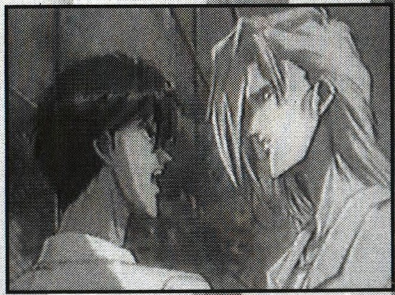
This title almost seems to affirm the meaning of the *Yaoi* acronym "no climax, no point, no meaning" as the film appears rushed, which makes the story's melodrama more apparent and less accessible. Whereas the manga incorporates the occasional sequence of humor, the anime has omitted this to focus upon the intensity of the





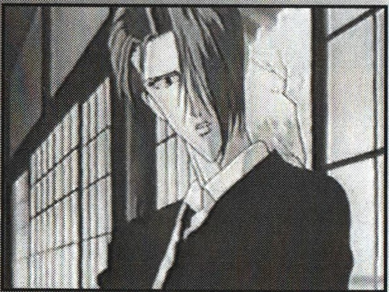






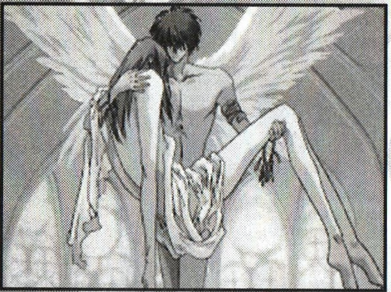
Zetsuai 1989 © Minami Ozaki • Shueisha • Madhouse.

feelings of the two men, which due to the speed of the story becomes a little unbelievable. It is very difficult to empathize with Koji as he seems to have developed an undying need for Izumi without an especially good reason (due to the story's trimming), which makes it hard to believe that, in the sequel to the OVA, the pair are living together. Izumi, in reaction to Koji's unhindered desire, is angry and confused and it takes a great deal of reading into the situation to understand that Izumi has fallen for Koji.



There are some parts in the film that are very well constructed and the characters do look very good, but to do justice to the intensity of Ozaki's storytelling appears to be very difficult. The film suffers by taking itself far too seriously and by losing subtlety in basic use of color and direction.

As for music and seiyuu (voice actors) in *Zetsuai 1989*, all parts appear to be well considered and suit the overall themes of the anime very well. Sho Hayami and Takehito Koyasu (the voices of Koji and Izumi) appear to portray the characters with passion and integrity. The music again is very akin with character of Koji and expresses his personal intensity.

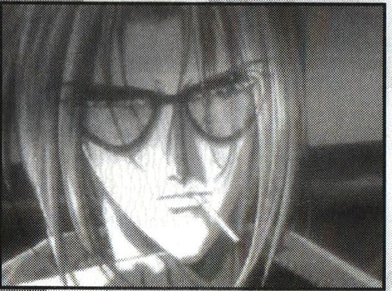


The film is a *shonen-ai* classic and a clear link to more recent themes in *Yaoi* and boy's love anime. Despite having a few problems in terms of filmic structure, this is a must for all fans of bishonen anime!

Designs:	Animation:	Soundtrack:	Story:	Translation:	Average:
4	3.5	3	2	—	3.5

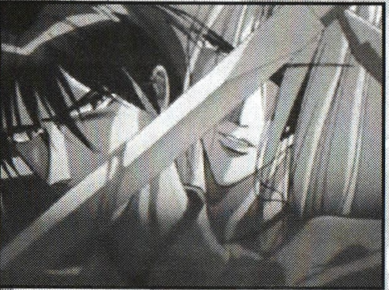
CATHEXIS

In 1994 Madhouse continued to explore *Zetsuai* and the visual works of Ozaki in a 30-min. release entitled *Cathexis*. *Cathexis* translates from Greek as an absolute concentration of emotional energy to a concept or thing, which is in turn a tribute to Minami Ozaki herself and her attitude to her work. The feature consists of five *Zetsuai* themed music videos and a short gallery of Ozaki's art at the end. Each video has a seemingly separate production team (all the videos feature a separate aesthetic) and feature direction from Katsuyuki Kodera, Yoshiaki Kawajiri, Koichi Chiaki, Toshio Hirata and Rintaro. The videos feature some explicit violent and sexual themes, which are mostly contained in the lyrics.



Bad Blood

The first, and perhaps most uneventful of the five videos features Koji singing moodily in bleak urban interiors. The lighting is beautiful which is common with Madhouse productions and is the most affective part of the video. Koji is shown touching and holding women whilst images of Izumi flash in and out of the frames, which seems to represent his professional image and personal desires. The song itself is a little odd, but suits the aesthetic and is relatively atmospheric. ★★★

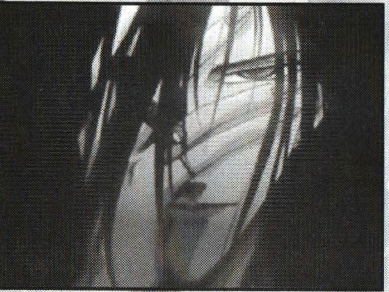


Jesus Christ Love For You

This video features perhaps the best song and the most romantic interaction between Koji and Izumi. As the title suggests, it is centered around religious imagery and focuses upon Izumi's suffering. He is portrayed as a fallen angel and Koji as his savior in the picturesque settings of ornate churches and snow-covered landscapes. This video directly references images from the manga, which are presented as beautiful stained glass windows. The video also appears to subtly question the issue of Izumi's sexuality and Koji's honest intentions to save him. It succeeds in places to convey a profound message. ★★★★

Katuai

This video features a rather inconsistent style and focuses upon Koji writing and producing songs whilst thinking of Izumi. Again it is well lit and shot, showing Koji at the recording studio and on stage and includes some rather suggestive stroking of a microphone pole! ★★★



Zetsuai 20XX

The fourth video is set in a classic post apocalyptic war zone, where Koji and Izumi are engaged in combat against each other. Koji is dressed in what appears to be a futuristic interpretation of a Nazi uniform. As in films such as the second *Urusei Yatsura* film *Beautiful Dreamer* there is the presence of token nazi aesthetic via uniform, which is in fact not unique to this piece. Minami Ozaki's art occasionally plays with nazi symbols, assumedly because they have a lot in common with her own artistic uses of stark black, white and red (it also holds less of a taboo than in the west). The track "Crime of Passion" is composed of melodramatic guitar music and the vocals of Sho Hayami. ★★★

Cathexis © Minami Ozaki • Shueisha • Madhouse.

Moonlight Eternal Moebius

Featuring some stunning sequences of animation and an experimental mix of live action and animation, the final music promo is a dreamy gothic rendition of the *Zetsuai* story featuring scenes inspired by the sequel, *Bronze: Zetsuai since 1989*. It has perhaps the most appealing and consistent style of all the videos with a nice accompanying song. ★★★★

Cathexis is an interesting and meaningful reflection upon Madhouse Studio's experience with *Zetsuai* and is a worthwhile contribution to the animated form of Minami Ozaki's work.

Designs: 3 Animation: 4 Soundtrack: 3 Lyrics: 4 Translation: — Average: 4

Bronze: Zetsuai Since 1989

The final chapter of the *Zetsuai* saga was converted from its manga roots and released in 1996 by Production IG (*Furi Kuri*, *The End of Evangelion*). Following not the events of the previous film, but rather continuing where the manga left off, it makes itself sequel to the original text only, disregarding the Madhouse interpretation of the story.

In this OVA, time jumps ahead to where the *Bronze* manga starts, when Izumi and Koji are living together. Their relationship appears intimate, if a little awkward and complicated. Following Izumi's unsure confession of love for Koji, he then disappears for a four-day trip to Italy, leaving Koji a note. Koji, stricken, chases Izumi to the airport on a motorbike. Irrational and consumed with desire, Koji crashes his bike into the car in front…

What follows is the difficult emotional recovery for both characters and the circulation of blame whilst trying to make sense of and resolve the connection between them.

Whereas *Zetsuai* explores the background of Izumi, *Bronze* reveals more of Koji's past and introduces us to his cold and ruthless brothers Hirose and Akihito. Izumi and Koji are forced to make the final and ultimate decision for their love and their futures…

Though *Bronze* is the same length as the original *Zetsuai 1989*, the film is much better paced and constitutes a far superior plot structure. The characters, though engaging in the same melodramatic conflict, are far more believable and better developed. The film goes further than the original to explore the romantic nature of their relationship and tries to explore their interaction as a couple.

For fans of *shonen ai* this is perhaps a more rewarding experience than *Zetsuai 1989*, which not only obscures the relationship of Koji and Izumi, but also removed more than a book and a half of plot from the original manga from the end of the film! (No wonder the jump is confusing!) Though arguably this film represents a mere fraction of the *Bronze* saga in manga form and to its readers would perhaps be just as troublesome as the Madhouse version of *Zetsuai 1989*.

Aesthetically the film perhaps has a little more in common with Minami Ozaki's art than with Madhouse's reinterpretation of it. Some viewers may in fact find this problematic as Ozaki often has a strange interpretation of anatomy and it appears as if IG has tried to emulate this. Consequentially, the unique nature of the style, when animated, loses its subtlety. Another thing which doesn't translate well into animation is a lack of interior mouth anatomy, which is distracting to the overall look of the film.

Music is not as important to the plot as it was in *Zetsuai 1989* and *Cathexis* (partially because *Bronze* represents a transitional phase for Koji and also because he loses his voice for most of the film!), but Sho Hayami returns to do the song vocals along with the rest of the original voice cast.

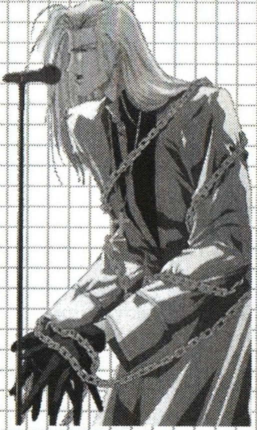
Zetsuai and *Bronze* are stories complex and lengthy enough to have made a full series and perhaps this would have been a better way to produce them. As OVAs, they have the virtue of a more open ability to explore the more romantic and sexual aspects of the story, and yet despite this fact the studios have neglected the opportunity to do so. This is probably due to the prospect of a closing off a wider audience. As with many condensed anime versions of an original text, much of the elegance and character development is lost, and what appears can be a mere shadow of the original creator's intent.

Bronze triumphs in it's condensed structure as a film which remains well paced and reserved, but with the knowledge that there are eleven volumes of *Bronze* in total, it makes us wonder what we're missing…

Designs: 2.5 Animation: 3 Soundtrack: 3 Story: 3.5 Translation: — Average: 3

Bronze: Zetsuai since 1989 © Minami Ozaki • Shueisha • Production I.G.. Now available in Japan on R2 DVD (VIBF-134, 49 min., ¥4700).

ZETSUAI: CHARACTER PROFILES



Further Reading Websites:

Special note of thanks to Jaimie at Cromlech Yaoi & *Shonen ai*: http://yaoi.tekenduis.net/

http://aestheticism.net

http://www.tsoft.net/~hbv/ozaki.html

http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Bay/7960/welcom.htm

http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Ginza/1365/content.htm

http://www.the-cathedral.net/entry.html

http://www.ochiba.net/anime/i-zetsuai.htm

http://www.ochiba.net/anime/i-bronze.htm

⚠ SPOILERS AHEAD ⚠

These descriptions are based around both the manga and anime to give a clearer account of their personalities.

Koji Nanjo

Though existing a generally selfish and supine life, Koji's true nature surfaced the first time he encountered Izumi, causing him to become uncompromisingly impetuous and desperately possessive. Raised in a decidedly odd family (one to rival Izumi's) his father was a ruthless businessman with an endless string of wives whilst his mother was a model with coldness mirrored strongly in Koji himself. He dropped out of school to pursue a career in singing, seemingly without much personal reason and became a womanizer and a heavy drinker. Falling deeper in love with Izumi, Koji became more irrational, forceful and dangerous than ever, losing control to his deepest obsession, forgetting himself in the process. Despite some of the truly awful things that Koji does in the story, his intentions for Izumi are honest and protective (if incredibly egocentric at times). In terms of *shonen ai* relationship structure, Koji is the "seme" (dominant) partner, both in his design (he's taller, larger — despite being younger) and in his constant ability to sway Izumi to a compromise.

Birth Date: December 24th; Height: 189 cm; Weight: 74kg; Blood Type: A; Voice Actor: Sho Hayami

Takuto Izumi

Described as Ozaki's perpetual victim, Izumi is the embodiment of tragedy, starting from age 5 when he witnessed his mother murder his father. He was wounded badly during the conflict and bears a deep scar on his left hip. Subsequently Izumi became introverted, fearing contact with others due to the prospect of his past being uncovered. This grim reality also prevents Izumi from pursuing a promising career as international soccer player (as if Koji would let him!). Izumi lives alone at the beginning of the story, working nights to support himself and immersing himself in soccer practice whenever possible. He is stubborn and very quick to anger and yet has a very emotional and generous side. As a love interest, Izumi is completely innocent and clueless, never once understanding or questioning Koji's desire (until one particular point in *Zetsuai*) and has never experienced any kind of sexual contact until Koji shows up…

As the designated "uke" (passive – despite his usual adamant resilience) Izumi is designed as the responsive half of the duo, (with the significance of his scar, etc.) frequently giving into Koji's persuasiveness and even becoming his live-in housekeeper, setting up the dynamic of their relationship. It has been said that Izumi would be much happier had he never met Koji and, following the events of the plot, there is much to support this response and suggests that Izumi should've escaped a long time ago!

Birth Date: August 15th; Height: 177 cm; Weight: 57kg; Blood Type: O; Voice Actor: Takehito Koyasu

Zetsuai 1989 & ***Cathexis*** © Minami Ozaki • Shueisha • Madhouse. ***Bronze: Zetsuai since 1989*** © Minami Ozaki • Shueisha • Production I.G..

ZETSUAI: CHARACTER PROFILES (Continued)

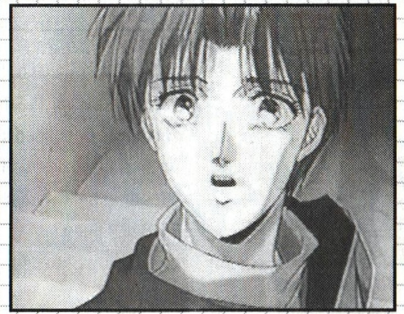
Katsumi Shibuya

Katsumi doesn't feature heavily in the anime, but is an integral part of the original plot. Nephew of the owner of the record company Koji is signed to, Katsumi acts as an assistant manager and even an unwelcome mentor to Koji, often intervening in his relationship with Izumi.

Knowing Koji since school, their connection was deepened by the death of Katsumi's younger sister at the age of 13 from hemophilia. She was a huge fan of Koji's music, valuing his talent over all else, encouraging him to pursue a career in singing after she died. Her loss has encouraged Katsumi to aim for a position in medicine in his later years.

Katsumi is an incorrigible flirt and has adopted a strange habit of using Japanese girl speech patterns to promote his quirky and frivolous nature.

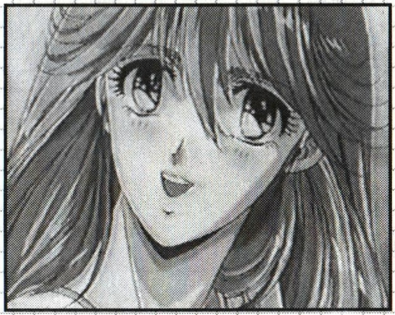
Voice Actor: Kappei Yamaguchi (also the voice of Inu-Yasha)



Serika Izumi

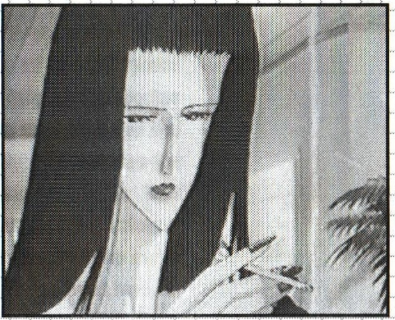
Izumi's younger sister lives with her adoptive parents and their younger brother Yuugo. Unlike Izumi, she appears to have led a more stable life and is less affected by the death of their parents. She adores Koji and spends most of her time inquiring about their relationship and worrying about Izumi. Despite originally showing romantic interest in Koji she was always astutely aware that he was in love with someone else via the nature of his singing.

Voice Actor: Kumiko Nishihara



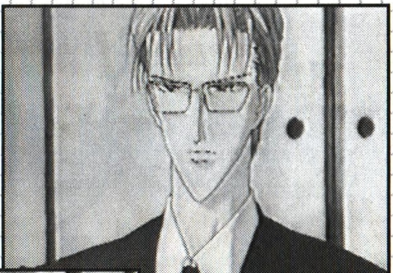
Meiko Minamimoto

A famous actress who Koji dates on and off to detract media attention away from his relationship with Izumi. She playfully calls Koji "boy" (well, he is only 16 after all) and likes to think of herself as his girlfriend. Koji, on the other hand, uses her to control his overflowing frustrations and desire for Izumi and amongst other things, to borrow an array of expensive cars from her! She is forceful, beautiful and intrusive and thus exposes herself to the more dangerous and ruthless side of Koji.



Hirose Nanjo

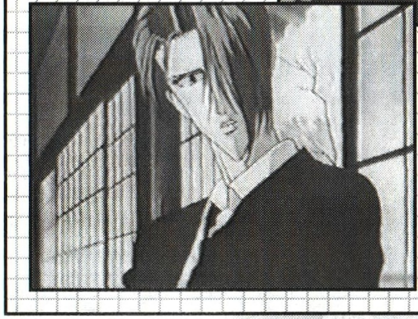
Though not fully developed in the *Bronze* OVA, Koji's eldest brother appears just as cold, yet not quite as strange, as he did in the original manga. Hirose is in his 30's and, despite having a wife and child, he harbors a ruthless and unhealthy obsession for Izumi that exceeds even Koji's. Hirose acts as a surrogate father to his younger brother Akihito and exhibits a vengeful attitude to Koji for how he treated Akihito when they were younger. He is certainly one of the most threatening and disturbing characters in the manga...



Akihito Nanjo

Similarly glossed over, Akihito is yet again older than Koji and very emotionally unstable. When Koji was born, he became the favored son leaving Akihito emotionally neglected as a child. His dislike for his brother was pushed even further when Koji slept with his girlfriend. He is notoriously rude and loud and exhibits some very strange and possessive feelings for Hirose.

Voice Actor: Kikuchi Masami



ZETSUAI MANGA: ZETSUAI 1989

EDITIONS TONKAM
ZETSUAI
1989
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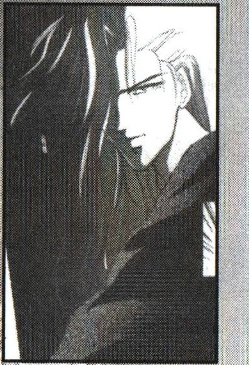
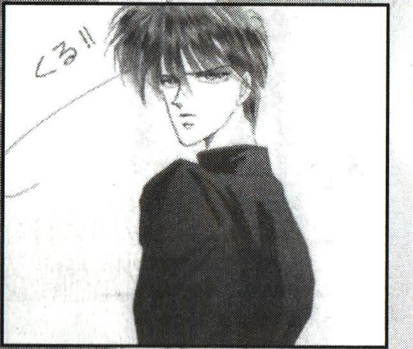
5
MINAMI OZAKI

"It is for that idea that I breathe, that my blood flows, that I am an artist" – Minami Ozaki, *Bronze Zetsuai since 1989* OVA.

Making her official debut at the age of 20, Minami Ozaki began work on *Zetsuai* the following year in the short story "3 Days", which was published in *Margaret* magazine. In 1989, she began the serialized version of *Zetsuai* and became very popular, extending her influence beyond the world of *doujinshi. Zetsuai 1989* has been serialized into five volumes of collected manga released by Shueisha.

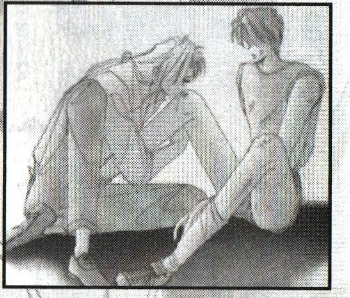
It is common with all manga to anime conversions to find a level of difference in what is supposedly the same story and *Zetsuai* is clearly no exception to this rule. The positive affects of altered narratives and styles between the mediums is the range of possible experiences and enjoyment you can get from either (though it is usually better to watch the anime before reading the manga, it's not so easy to feel that the original text has been betrayed that way). For the greater part it can be said that an anime narrative functions completely differently to that of manga, for example, the scenes and stories are paced and divided differently according to their method of release. In the case of *Zetsuai* as a five-book manga, it is easier to see why it was difficult to pace and alter the narrative for a 45-minute OVA. It is for this reason that both the anime and the manga should be approached as different texts with a fresh perception for each.





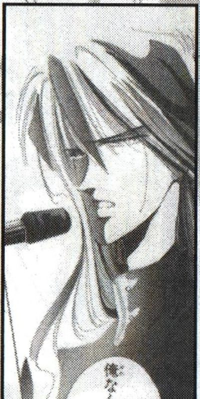
Zetsuai, as the OVA's have suggested, is an intense and emotional story, which seems to extend beyond Ozaki's nature as a professional manga artist and writer into something deeper and more personally significant.

Following her debut in *doujinshi*, Ozaki's art has changed considerably since the reworking of *Captain Tsubasa*'s Ken and Kojiro in *Dokusen Yoku*. Whereas many artists develop a bolder and more consistent style in their later works, *Zetsuai 1989* and *Bronze* seems to be the opposite. Where she previously worked confidently with stark black, white and gray, her style has more recently adopted a delicate and sparse, hatched design. This style seems to reflect the fragility of the story and the connection of the artist to her work.



In terms of the affect of the aesthetics to the visual and narrative structure, the story and art is very spaced out, making it often very calm and dreamlike. The style also presents the story in a more humorous and positive light (despite featuring a few more grave and terrible events left out of the OVA's), consequentially the story is lighter and much more plausible. Ozaki paces melodrama against her tendency towards the use of the shojo cute style for the more funny parts of the manga making the whole thing a varied and often a strangely positive read.

The story provides a fuller account of Izumi as an active character as opposed to in the anime where the viewer adopts a voyeuristic stance, which mirrors Koji's, neglecting Izumi as a developed character. What develops in the manga is a constant state of interaction between the two men typified by Koji returning to school to be closer to Izumi. There are some very intense scenes of sexual tension, which build to the closing point of the anime (which occurs in the middle of book 4) and to the open conclusion of part 5. The story dances between a fragile state of codependency between Koji and Izumi and the violent reaction to push towards and away from desire.



Skillfully continuing the theme of angst in *shonen ai,* Ozaki has produced work which seems to express the very heart of the medium, themes of which are present in *Gravitation* (acceptance of sexuality, the media) and *Ai no Kusabi* (the attraction of opposites). To read *Zetsuai* is to follow the strong relationship of an artist to a work that mirrors her own personal interest in it. Fans of CLAMP and *shoujo* manga will appreciate the depth and intensity of *Zetsuai 1989,* and if *shonen ai* fans aren't already aware of this title, it's one that they would do very well to invest in!

Zetsuai 1989 (1990-91), Minami Ozaki, Shueisha, 5 volumes, Black and White, ¥390-400 ea. The manga is also available in French from Éditions Tonkam (ISBN Série 2-84580-041-X, 4.88 Eur., $11.95 Can).

Designs:	4	Art:	3	Inking:	3	Story:	4.5	Translation:	—	Average:	4

Zetsuai 1989 (Manga) © Minami Ozaki • Shueisha.

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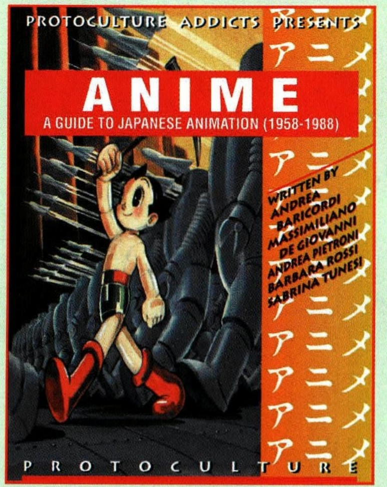
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Anime: A Guide To Japanese Animation

A Filmography of the first 30 years of Anime

This comprehensive volume covers all the anime produced in Japan during the Sixties, the Seventies and most of the Eighties — including not only the movies and OVAs, but also the TV series and not only those that were popular or translated in English, but even the most obscure anime! It offers over 300 pages of information and lists chronologically over 1,200 titles, from *Astroboy* to *Akira!* Each notice gives the original title, its literal translation, production company, category (adventure, comedy, sci-fi, etc.), duration or number of episodes, release or airing date, distribution company, as well as a short description and commentary. The notice is preceded by an identification number (to facilitate research in the indexes) and its type (Series, Movie, OVA, Special). For each year an introduction highlights the themes or titles that marked that particular year. The book also has several indexes to make any research easy. It is the first book dedicated to the early years of anime, from the moment it became an "industry" in 1958 (although the first chapter also covers the 18th century origins of anime and the pre-industry era of 1917-1957), to the moment it started to explode into a huge cultural phenomenon in 1988. One of the most essential English-language anime references!

Published by Protoculture; written by Andrea Baricordi, Massimiliano De Giovanni, Andrea Pietroni, Barbara Rossi, and Sabrina Tunesi; presented by Claude J. Pelletier. SC, 320 pages, B&W, 1238 notices, over 400 illustrations, fully indexed. ISBN 2-9805759-0-9. $25.00.

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by Miyako Matsuda

BATTLE ROYALE

In December 2000, on the dawn of the true millenium, *Battle Royale* was released in Japan and caused great controversy, becoming one of the most talked about films in Japanese movie history. In its way, the film is a sarcastic look at today's Japan with a very strong message made by director Kinji Fukasaku — the world is a nasty place, but don't give up. Run and live!

Why is this film so controversial? The plot of the film involves 42 junior high school students (all are 15 years old) who are sent to a remote island to kill each other — Imagine how much more exciting *Survivor* would be if it was this no holds barred. In 2000, during the previous Prime Minister Mori's inefficient governing, it may just be that they really had no policy to debate and wasted time attacking a film instead. In the Japanese National Assembly (called the National Diet — much like Congress or British Parliament) Mr. Ishii, a member of the House of Representatives, blasted that the film *Battle Royale* was immoral and the government should censor when a movie can influence the youth in a very negative manner. Cultural Minister Oshima was asked to create a law to limit viewing of such a film and created the category "R-15" (Restricted to those under the age of 15).

The plot of the original novel is actually quite different from the film, which altered its approach and the ending. In a canny marketing move, Kinji Fukasaku and the producers invited the politicians to view the film and have a discussion about today's Japan and the lack of communication between generations and it was published in the magazines and on the Internet. Director Fukasaku, who is in his 70's (!), was only 15 when WWII ended. He saw a living hell then, filled with corpses. These days, the focus in Japan seems to be the trouble with the youth: the bullying, rejection in schools, high rate of youth suicide and crimes. The adults don't seem to know what to do about these serious issues. Through this film, I think that Fukusaku really wanted to say to Japan's youth that they must be strong to survive in the new global reality. The world is full of uncertainty — be strong and live!

Personally, I find the subject of wanton violence and killing a shocking and nasty matter. But as the real world has shown us repeatedly senseless violence (especially after 9/11, the current Middle East crisis and the Columbine school massacre), this sort of film may make sense of an often confusing world and create a will to survive. *Battle Royale* might look like an extreme film, but reality can often be more so. We all know it now, don't we?

Main character Shuya Nanahara (played by Japan's rising star Tatsuya Fujiwara) is an orphaned 15 year old boy who hates the world with a passion. His father committed suicide over unemployment and his mother took off to escape from poverty and misery. Shuya, along with 41 other students, is gassed and brought to a remote island where no one lives. Their homeroom teacher, along with help from the Japanese Military (in the novel the country is referred to as the Republic of the Great Eastern Asia), force the students to kill each other. Only one is allowed to survive! "Why?", you may ask? Deep down, I don't think the adults know how to deal with the problems of their children, so it's better that they just eliminate themselves. The parents of these students don't even want them in their households. Do you know what the solution offered in the original book was? Send the survivors to the USA! Yes, the United States of America. The Japanese youth all want to live like Americans in the land of freedom. In the film, they simply become "Wanted" for murder and return to Japan to face the difficult reality in society awaiting them. In relation to the difficulties facing modern youth, I think Fukasaku wanted to send out a wake-up call, "When I was fifteen I cleaned up dead corpses and hated the establishment that brought this disaster upon us, but I'm here and survived. You can do it too."

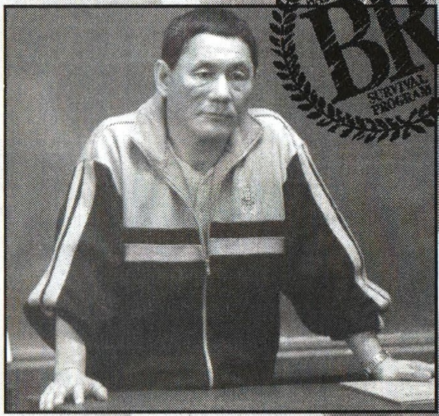
The novel's approach is strongly sarcastic, expressing individual freedom's stand against the establishment and the nation. The film's is slightly different. It may be easier for the "graduates" to go to the US, the land of freedom, but Fukusaku I think wanted to show that the youth would be better to stand up for themselves and face their problems and create a better society. The shocking subject of killing is causing concern among parents and politicians. Yes, it is shocking, but remember that in many parts of the world today children live in warzones. The film may be categorized as immoral by the PTA, but what are they themselves really doing to combat the problems of bullying and suicide? As I watched this movie, the very popular US show *Survivor* came to mind. I wonder what would happen if 15 year-old American students were forced into a similar situation? Would they fight back against the establishment? Why did the Japanese students kill each other when they were told to? Why didn't they fight back? Yes, this is an ultra-violent film all right, but adults need to think of education reform first. What a sarcastic film, I tell you. ★★★☆

Batoru Rowaiaru [*Battle Royal*]. Japan, 2000, 113 min.; Dir.: Kinji Fukasaku; Scr.: Kenta Fukasaku; Based on the novel by: Koshun Takami; Phot.: Katsumi Yanagishima; Ed.: Hirohide Abe; Set Designs: Kyôko Heya; Mus.: Masamichi Amano; Sound: Kunio Ando; Prod.: Akio Kamatani, Tetsu Kayama, Masumi Okada, Masao Sato; Cast: Tatsuya Fujiwara (Shuya Nanahara), Aki Maeda (Noriko Nakagawa), Taro Yamamoto (Shougo Kawada), Masanobu Ando (Kazou Kiriyama), Kou Shibasaki (Mitsuko Souma), Chiaki Kuriyama (Takako Chigusa), Ai Iwamura (Smiling Winner), Takeshi Kitano (Teacher), Yûko Miyamura (Training Video Girl), Takashi Tsukamoto (Shinji Mimura).

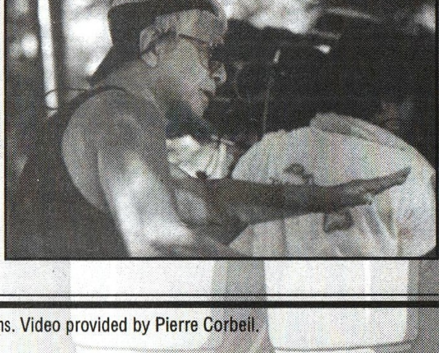
The movie is available in Japan on two R2 DVD version: the Regular Edition (DSTD-2017, 114 min., ¥5200, rated R-15, released on 9/21/2001) and the Special Edition (DSTD-2055, 122 min., ¥5200, released on 5/21/2002; this version is edited (around 100 cuts) to make it suitable for general audience, but also has extra scenes which make it longer). Also available on DVD in Hong Kong, United Kingdom and France. The English version of the novel by Koshun Takami is available from by Viz (504 pg, $15.95 US) and the manga is published by Tokyopop (3 vol., 192 pg ea., $9.99 US ea.).

A sequel movie is released this summer, *Battle Royal II*, focusing on seven BR survivors who formed a terrorist group named Wild Seven. This time high-school students are sent to an island not to fight each other, but to search and destroy the terrorists.

DIGITAL dts SURROUND
42名學生，被迫參加
BATTLE ROYALE
大逃殺
UNIVERSE www. .com



Below: Director Kinji Fukasaku



Battle Royale © Battle Royale Production Committee • Toei • Kobi • Japan Publishing / MF Pictures / Wowow / Gaga Communications. Video provided by Pierre Corbeil.

by Miyako Matsuda

MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL: MOVIE REVIEWS PART 4: *LILY FESTIVAL*

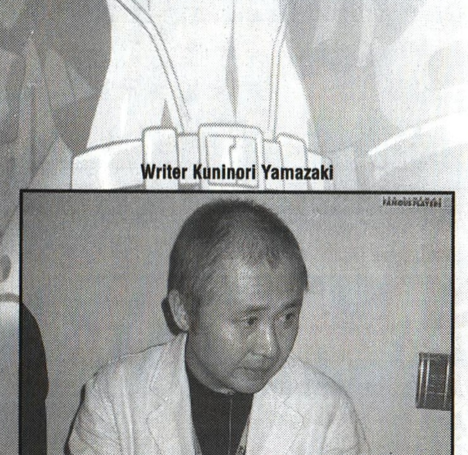
A Japanese movie about old grandmas and grandpas having sex?!! Most of the readers of this magazine are, I imagine, young people who do not think of senior citizens as sexual beings, right? (especially in Japan, lo and behold!). If you are a religious (Catholic, Muslim or whatever) or conservative person, this movie is not for you. I warn you because you have to be really open minded to see a movie such as *Yuri Sai.* As you know, the Japanese population is aging at an accelerated rate, with fewer children being born (an average couple in today's Japan have 1.5 or less children) and men normally die first of overwork (the Japanese even have a word for this: *Ka-roshi,* "overworked death"). So, who are around most and longer? Yes, grannies! And I am not joking, for if the trend continues in Japan, it will soon be a country populated by grannies. Unless Japanese couples decide to have more children or the country decides to admit immigrants, this is what is going to happen. So, this is the main subject of this movie: grannies' sexual lives! In fact, at the North American premiere of this film at the Montreal World Film festival, the script writer of this movie, Mr. Kuninori Yamazaki, was present to tell us that this is the first movie in Japan dealing about senior citizen sex (70 to 90 years old!) and that it has been generating both very positive and negative feedback. As I started watching it, I kept laughing, clapping my hands and yelling "Go for it, grannies!" I had a lot of fun and so did the audience (in fact, the theater was surprisingly full for such a foreign movie).

The movie begins with its main character, Mrs. Rie Miyano, a 73 year-old widow who suffered a lot because of her husband's love affairs. Mrs. Miyano lives in an apartment building, named "The Mariko Apartments", with five other elderly ladies who are also all widows, except for the landlady. When her best friend, who also lived at the same place, passes away, the vacant room is soon occupied by a 75 year-old gentleman named Mr. Miyoshi. When he moves in the Mariko Apartments with all those senior ladies, you can imagine that this handsome ladies man (a total playboy!) becomes their Prince! Those ladies start acting like bees looking for honey. All the ladies in these apartments having had difficult lives and failed marriages (one even became a member of a Buddhist sect to escape her unhappiness), the arrival of Mr. Miyoshi gives them a reason to live. He is such a ladies man and his sweet words make the ladies feel like they have reached Heaven! As time goes by, the five senior ladies all become his lovers (as Mrs. Miyano puts it "We are the dwarves and Mr. Miyoshi is Snow White..."). Mr. Miyoshi is played by Mickey Curtis (half-Japanese, half-American) who is absolutely perfect for this role of a fashionable, well-mannered ladies man.

Director Sachi Hamano

However, this is not the end of the story, because there is a big twist that will either shock you or make you laugh. The main character, Mrs. Miyano, is a lesbian! When all the ladies find out that they have been deceived by Mr. Miyoshi (he had sex with all of them!), Mrs. Miyano is, of course, disappointed, but when she talks to another senior lady friend of the apartments about sex with Mr. Miyoshi, she somehow approaches her and it works! Those two grannies become lovers and take a trip to Yokohama, where they stay in a fancy Sheraton hotel and make love to each other! (Don't worry: during this movie they suggest sex, they talk about it, but they don't show anything).

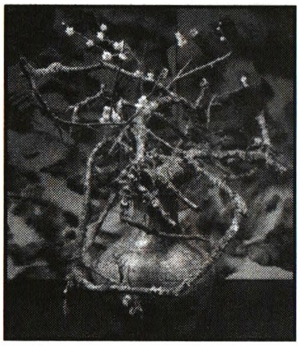
Writer Kuninori Yamazaki



From the very first scenes, the viewer sees images of beautiful white lilies and this movie ends with this beautiful image of millions of lilies to symbolize that those grannies are still sexual beings and beautiful. The Scriptwriter, Mr. Yamazaki, told me during a short interview, which took place after the movie premiere, that the original novel writer, Houko Momotani, had met many senior citizen ladies in bars, restaurants and hot springs and that, surprisingly, they are really willing to talk about their sex lives and erotic stories. Ms. Momotani was impressed by the sexual power of those grannies and came up with this idea "what would happen to those ladies if a handsome senior citizen man was to suddenly appear in their midst?". Mrs. Miyano is played by beautiful Kazuko Yoshiyuki (in her prime, she played a sexy housewife in director Nagisa Oshima's *Ai No Borei / The Ghost Of Love* in the 1970's) and her charming smile really makes us hope to age as gracefully as she has. But yes, I warn you, if you are a faithful Catholic or Muslim who forbids homosexuality or plural sexual relationships, please stay away from this film. If you believe in openness and accept the sexuality of senior citizens, then this will be a delightful experience for you. You know, we all age and die some day. So we might as well enjoy our sex lives like the characters in that movie! ★★★★

Yuri Sai (*Lily Festival*). 2001, 35 mm, Color, 100 min., Dir.: Sachi Hamano; Scr.: Kuninori Yamazaki; Based on the novel by: Houko Momotani; Phot.: Katuharu Oyamada; Ed.: Naoki Kaneko; Mus.: Sigemi Yosioka; Prod./Distr.: Sachiko Suzuki, Tantansha Co., Ltd; Cast: Kazuko Yoshiyuki, Mickey Curtis, Utae Shoji, Kazuko Shirakawa, Sanae Nakahara, Chisako Hara, Hisako Okata, Sachiko Meguro. North American Premiere.

MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL: MOVIE REVIEWS PART 4: *ORIUME*



First, you may wonder what "Ori Ume" is. *Ume* is the beautiful flower of the Japanese apricot, or plum blossom. *Ume* originally came from ancient China and was brought to Japan during the Nara era (about 7-8th century). It quickly became popular because the plum fruits could be used in all kinds of fashion, such as pickled plums and plum liquor (plum wine is delicious!). And this plant is really strong! *Ume* can become a giant tree and even if you cut a branch, the blossoms on that branch will keep opening! Japanese people love cherry blossoms (*Sakura*), but once you cut a branch, its blossoms will not keep at all (this is why *Sakura* is not used in *Ikebana*, the Japanese traditional flower arrangements). So, *Ori Ume*, which literally means the broken or snapped *Ume* branches, symbolizes the senior citizens in this film, directed by Hisako Matsui. A senior citizen (especially with Alzheimer) might look like an old broken/snapped *Ume* branch, but it can still blossom! What a beautiful concept!

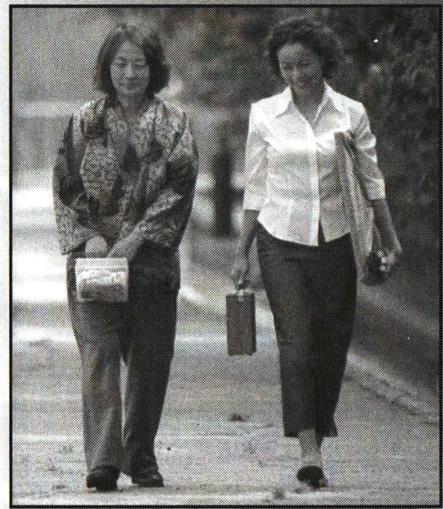
Frankly speaking, this is a film about people who have Alzheimer and their family members who have to live with this difficult situation. Yet, despite its difficult subject, this film certainly gives hope to its viewers! To me, personally, I would like to unconditionally applaud director Hisako Matsui and his movie for presenting a subject as hard and complicated as Alzheimer with such beauty.

Today, senior citizens in most so called advanced nations, such as North America, Europe, Japan, certainly live longer in general. Until recently (maybe until the end of W.W.II or so), in Japan, to see seniors over 75 or 80 was quite rare. Most of the time, people of the past accepted the turning point of 60 as being "old age" and retired to die soon after due to illnesses, etc. But, as the medical system, along with nutrition, improved, more and more citizens live longer. However, living longer can bring on the horrible reality of Alzheimer. Unfortunately, today's medical community, including the American Doctors Association, etc., openly declares that there is NO cure for this unfortunate illness because people age and their brains cannot function normally any longer. So what do people have to do to deal with this problem?!

The story of this film takes place in the suburb of a big city in Aichi Prefecture. There, a middle-aged married couple in their 40's with good jobs lives in a decent house with two children. The husband's mother is in her 70's and is living alone. Then the couple decides to live with her, so the mother moves in. This is today's Japanese typical family structure (most of the time, men die quicker than women due to overwork, stress, etc.). Japan is definitely facing an enormous problem with its aging society. Most Japanese families seem to face this problem "How can we take care of elderly people in our households?" Then, the story shows that the mother begins to suffer from Alzheimer and starts acting strangely. Director Matsui chose a style of storytelling that educates people and does not judge or preach. Based on the novel "*Wasuretemo*" (depicting the author's own life) by Motoko Kosuga, which talks about her mother-in-law, Masako-san, this film is really easy to comprehend and viewers can understand exactly what is happening among this family.

The family members become psychologically exhausted by this aging grandma's behaviors and even think of bringing her to an institution. But the daughter-in-law, Tomoe, decides to go beyond her duty and chooses to keep her. Then, after going through horrible psychological agony, a miracle happens! Despite the illness, this aging mother can draw pictures! A mysterious talent was still inside this Alzheimer patient's mind! Everyone is astonished when her paintings start receiving awards! The human brain is such a mysterious thing. I was struck by the message in this film "We, as humans, cannot live unless we are accepted as we are." Fantastic performances by two major actresses, Kazuko Yoshiyuki and Mieko Harada! I hope this film will be seen by many people all over the world! ★★★☆

Oriume, Japan, 2001, 115 min., Dir./Scr.: Hisako Matsui; Based on the novel *Wasuretemo* by Motoko Kosuge; Phot.: Kouichi Kawakami; Ed.: Yukio Watanabe; Mus.: Masahiro Kawasaki; Prod.: Hisako Matsui, Essen Communications, Inc.; Cast: Mieko Harada, Kazuko Yoshiyuki, Masa Tommys, Tokiko Kato, Asami Tano, Reiji Miyake, Katsuko Kanai, Kimiko Inui, Rei Okamoto.



Writer Motoko Kosuge & her mother-in-law Masako-san

Dir. Isako Matsui

© 2001/ Hisako Matsui/ Essen Communications.

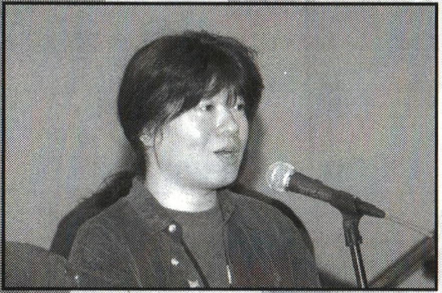
ANIME WORLD: CON & FEST

by Kevin Lillard

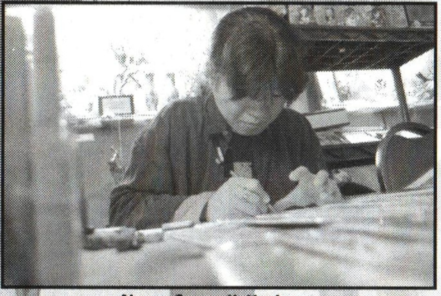
SUGOI CON

Animator Scott Frazier

Translator Neil Nadleman



Artist Senno Knife



Above: Senno Knife draws
Below: Singer Nekoi Rutoto

The link between Ray Charles and Lyn Minmay could be found on an October weekend in Kentucky, when Masao Maruyama and Reba West both appeared at the Sugoi Con anime convention. The song, the producer and the actor all came together in one of the most acclaimed anime movies of recent years, *Metropolis*.

In 1962, Charles recorded "Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music," and the hit single from that LP was Charles' cover of "I Can't Stop Loving You" by Don Gibson. One of the fans of that song was Hayashi Shigeyuki, an animator who worked with the great Osamu Tezuka on his first animated TV series at the time that the Charles album was new.

Decades later, the animator had taken the pen name Rintaro and become an anime director, but he never forgot the song or Tezuka's early manga stories. Rintaro worked with animator and screenwriter Katsuhiro Otomo to create a film based on Tezuka's early *Metropolis* manga, blending cel and computer animation. *Metropolis* uses "I Can't Stop Loving You" as the score for its climactic scene.

That film was created by the Mad House studio and produced by Masao Maruyama of Madhouse, another admirer of Tezuka's works. When *Metropolis* was dubbed into English, the lead role of android Tima was voiced by actor Rebecca Forstadt. Fifteen years before recording that role, Forstadt had taken the name "Reba West" when she voiced the role of Lyn Minmay in the dub of a show that was called *Robotech* in the U.S.

These unlikely links came together on Oct. 18-20, 2002 in Erlanger, Kentucky when the Sugoi Con convention was held, and both West and Maruyama were guests of honor. They were joined by some of the mainstays of the anime convention circuit: Steve Bennett and Doug Smith of IC Entertainment (formerlyStudio Ironcat), Robert DeJesus of Studio Capsule, animator Scott Frazier and translator Neil Nadleman.

Also on hand from Japan were manga artist Senno Knife and his wife, singer Nekoi Rutoto. Before Senno Knife struck out on his own as a manga artist, he studied at the best manga "school" in Japan, working as an assistant to Leiji Matsumoto. At the time, the working magnum opus in the "Leijiverse" was *Space Cruiser Yamato*, and Knife said he spent a lot of time drawing those familiar forced-perspective images of the reborn battleship. "Then I got to draw manga myself," said Knife when he appeared at Sugoi Con with Steve Bennett of IC Entertainment and wife Nekoi Rutoto . Knife's favorite works turned out to be horror manga, a genre that died out in U.S. comics, but stays strong in Japan. "I never was a fan of straight horror manga so I got to draw in a mix of genres, including horror and science fiction, but my best genre was horror. I feel that from Studio Ironcat I'm getting a chance to publish what I do best which is science fiction horror manga. *Dark Dimension* (an earlier Knife work which Ironcat published in English) was written for a girl's manga, which was no surprise because the biggest audience for horror manga is girls. This series isn't so scary as much as it is a story about the world of the dead."

Japanese horror stories — like Japanese serious fiction of many kinds — are known for their unhappy endings where it seems that everyone dies. Knife wants to scare people with his stories, but not depress them — so he tries not to be sadistically cruel to his protagonists. "I don't think I've ever killed off the main character. I avoid endings where the readers are depressed. It's just horrific during the story, but I can't guarantee happy endings. That would be a little bit of a spoiler for the reader. I call them "fantastic endings."" And just to show how unusual Knife's career has become; he's going to take time off from his manga career to draw story boards for a 2003 anime production which he says "...will be a lot like *Digimon*."

Knife's wife, Nekoi Rutoto, performs with the independent synth-techno band Psy-Doll, a group that tries to avoid both the worlds of peppy J-pop and the beautiful males of visual kei and J-rock. "I think there are two types of bands," she said. "One type is synthesized by a producer and the second type forms by itself. I think this is the same in the United States. Bands like the Spice Girls (which was a British group) are well thought out through market research, where the producers decide if they're salable. These synthetic bands have become popular as they're intended to become, but if you want the real thing you have to get away from the produced bands." While Nekoi thrives on the independent Japanese rock scene, she notes that those independent bands stay unknown because their members make no effort to promote them. Nekoi was one of the performing musical guests at Sugoi Con, joined by Swek, a rock band from Chicago.

Music also was a major part of the *Metropolis* movie, which was distinguished by its score that recalled jazz from the 1920's and 1930's. However, the song which accompanied the film's scene of destruction at the end, "I Can't Stop Loving You," was a country song that had been out for four years before it gained new fame from the Ray Charles performance. Fans at Sugoi Con had a chance to ask Maruyama how that music found its way

Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com, www.sugoicon.org.

SUGOI CON (Continued)

into *Metropolis*, and he was glad to answer. “That’s the kind of music the director Rintaro likes. We also literally meant what the lyrics mean “I can’t stop loving you,” referring to Osamu Tezuka and Tima the character. You can also consider that it means you can’t stop loving anime.”

Music can be written for a film or it can be used from an outside source, and Madhouse has used both approaches. A Madhouse series that started in October of 2002, *Hanada Shonen-shi*, used music from the Backstreet Boys. “It really depends,” Maruyama said. “Sometimes the music is predetermined, like in the *Story of Boy Hanada*. In other cases we set the music to match the anime. Since the *Story of Boy Hanada* is such a Japanese story, we wanted global music and global appeal, so we talked to the rights holder of the Backstreet Boys music.”

Along with character designer Yoshinori Kanemori, Maruyama spoke about Madhouse’s ambitious plans for 2003, with several movies and TV shows in production. At the time of Sugoi Con the final *Chobits* episode had been shown in Japan, and Maruyama said that Madhouse was ready to start on another series based on a Clamp series. From the successful *Trigun*, Madhouse also has the reputation of being the animation studio of manga artist Yasuhiro Nightow, and that led to a question of another animated *Trigun* series. “Nightow is still drawing the *Trigun* manga, but we don’t plan on making any more *Trigun* anime. Instead we’re going to make the *Gungrave* anime based on his ideas. It’s Nightow’s idea to make the anime slightly different from the video game.”

Maruyama has become a frequent visitor to North American anime conventions. Sugoi Con was his third trip to the U.S. in 2003. By contrast, West had attended few conventions in recent years, even though her Lyn Minmay performance in *Robotech* made her name familiar — and controversial — among the first wave of anime fans in the 1980’s. Since then, she’s kept active as a dialogue replacement actor specializing in children’s voices. West has remained in anime dubbing, serving as the voice actor for Mihoshi in the second half of the dubbed *Tenchi-Muyo* episodes and Tima in the *Metropolis* movie. “For women if you’re over 24, unless you’re gorgeous you’re pretty much over with unless you’re a character-type person, so you have to go to voice acting,” she said. Much of West’s work comes as a writer of dub scripts. “There are some directors who think you don’t need a (special dubbing) script but it’s torture to read a script that hasn’t been written for the lips,” she said. “A lot of producers because of Pro Tools (a digital sound editing hardware and software system from Digidesign, a subsidiary of Avid Technology) don’t worry about writing for the lips. It makes a huge difference for the actors to be able to read the lines and have it lay right in there. I started writing scripts about ten years ago. It’s the main source of my income. It’s incredibly tedious to write.”

Mari Iijima, the original voice of Minmay, tells how she happened to be in the right place at the right time when the role was cast and impressed producers with her musical ability. West has a similar story; she was acting around Los Angeles when she learned of the *Robotech* auditions. “I had no idea how big it was going to be,” recalled West. “The director asked me if I could sing, and I said “Sort of.” I just got up in front of the microphone and sang “It’s my party.” I couldn’t remember any of the words, but I got the part.”

Where Iijima was a singer who got an acting role, West was an actor who was turned into a singer. The name “Reba West” was born because *Robotech* was a non-union project and Forstadt was a union member. “We didn’t have a contract,” she said, adding that she once was glad she’d used a different name for the dub. “At that point *Robotech* had a lot of really rabid fans and people either loved it or they hated it.” Minmay’s ditzy character came from her youth, West said, adding that she still liked the character.

If Minmay was the kind of character that some fans loved to dislike, West’s singing fell in the same category — and she admitted as much at Sugoi Con. “Singing was never my main thing,” she said. “I loved it but I never was a trained singer. I was amazed at how people reacted. In *Robotech* I thought it was going to be like a rock song where they made several tracks of your voice to make it sound better, but it was like singing show tunes — it was difficult.” Even though West lives in the same area of California where Mari Iijima lives, the two Minmays have never really met. “I’ve been invited several times to see her sing in Los Angeles, but I’ve never been able to hear her. I don’t want to compare what I do to what she does because it’s so much different.”

The *Robotech* role came near the beginning of West’s acting career. Those were the days when before digital recording that allows for subtle modifications to performances that make them fit an on screen performance’s lip flaps. “You can take pretty bad scripts and they can squeeze it into your mouth,” West said. “You used to have to watch the time code and try to squeeze the dialogue in. If you got it wrong you had to do it over and over again. With Pro Tools you can get a lot of bad actors and they can get it right.”

Chicago band Swek

Madhouse producer Masao Maruyama

Character designer Yoshinori Kanemori

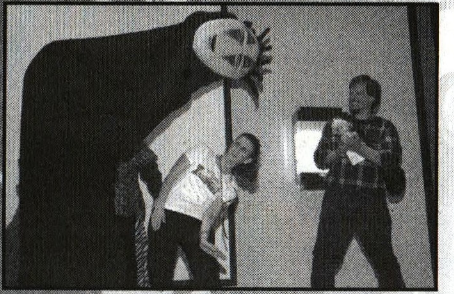
Above: Actor Reba West
Below: Flute costumer from *Violinist Of Hamelin*

ANIME WORLD: CON & FEST

by Kevin Lillard

C-KON

Hellsing costumers



Best Of Show No-Face costumer

Costumer Nickey Froberg and the Ein head

Above: Actor Amy Howard-Wilson
Below: Actor Michael Brady

Indianapolis is known for auto racing and basketball. It's not known for fandom events, even with a couple of sci-fi conventions each year — but that could change.

In 2003, the Indiana capital was scheduled to host the Gen Con Game Fair, the largest role playing game convention. In 2002, the city was the site for *Star Wars* Celebration II, which may have been the biggest sci-fi con ever with 25,000 people attending on each of three days. And in the autumn of that year, Indianapolis got its first anime convention, C-Kon. It wasn't a big event, but it did finally happen after several years' trying.

Anime fans at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., had held a couple of autumn events, but never were able to get a real convention underway until mid-November of 2002. They got space at a Marriott hotel on the east side of Indianapolis, invited guests of honor, attracted several dealers, and finally were able to stage the event.

C-Kon was so small and laid-back that the convention held two opening ceremonies. The first one was held on the convention's Friday afternoon but not enough people showed up, so the staff got the guests of honor to come back for another ceremony in the evening, after fans had left work and school.

Many of those fans showed up in costumes never before seen in central Indiana, amazing a high school band and a men's social organization that used the hotel at the same time. One family came as all three goddesses from *Oh My Goddess*, while another group made the *Inu-Yasha* cast. Add a couple of Lina Inverses, several *Chobits* dark and light, a *Hellsing* trio and a tall No-Face from *Spirited Away*, and C-Kon took on the look of a real anime convention.

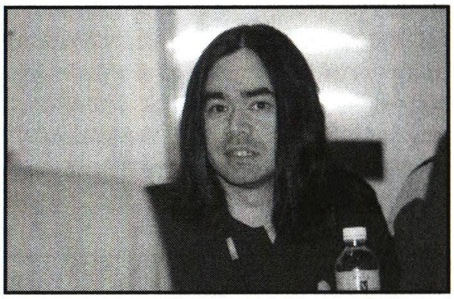
In the middle of it all was an Ein from *Cowboy Bebop* — at least the head, the product of two years' work by costumer Nickey Froberg. The Ein-in-progress was one of a series of big mascot-style costumes made by Froberg. The high point of her design work came in 2000 when Froberg traveled to Comic-Con International in San Diego with a Genma-panda outfit from Ranma 1/2 and got an audience with series creator Rumiko Takahashi.

Costumes like that depend on foam for their shape, and the trick to finishing the costumes is finding the foam. Some costumers use online foam stores, but the foam that shapes the Ein head came from furniture outlet stores. "Somewhere, someone who takes out the garbage has a trash container of foam that they can't give away," Froberg said. "I walked away from one furniture outlet store with what I consider a two year supply of foam. I'd be able to make five sofas with that foam, but it cost me only 20 bucks."

Froberg had an idea of how she wanted the head to look, but she didn't have the correct fur. Enter the cosplay hero: Larry Wise, another Virginia costumer who was making a kitsune costume with nine fox tails. "He ordered in bulk, and what he thought he was ordering in feet he was ordering in yards. He had two gigantic rolls — it looked like carpeting — and he said you can have it, I don't want it. I don't know how much he spent for it, and he just gave it to me." Armed with the fur and foam, Froberg was able to finish Ein's head, but the body remained unfinished at the time of C-Kon. She hoped it wouldn't take another two years to complete the Ein outfit.

The big foam mascot outfits have two shortcomings. All of that foam and fur serves as great insulation and makes the outfits hot to wear. Also, a costumer's field of vision is limited by those bulky costumes. "People don't realize it until they put the costume on and realize they can't see," explained Froberg. "My field of vision for Genma was right in front. For Pen-Pen, I could see to the sides, but not in front. For Totoro, all I could see was the ceiling, and I thought "This isn't what I had in mind."" Froberg recommends that costumers "road test" any outfit, regardless of construction, to make sure it's comfortable. Another factor, overlooked in the enthusiasm of creation, is leaving a provision to easily get out of the costume for bathroom breaks.

The little convention was lucky in attracting a group of actors, including Amy "Nova" Howard Wilson, Michael "Crusher Joe" Brady and two artists-turned actors, **Doug Smith** (right), the English-language *Golden Boy*, and Rosearik Rikki Simons, voice of Gir in *Invader Zim*. Also on hand was voice actor Wendee Lee, whose long flight from California kept her from attending C-Kon's first day.



Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com, www.ckon.org.

C-KON (Continued)

She made up for the late arrival on the second day with candid comments on the voice acting business. "I've definitely been exploited at times," she said at a panel discussion. "I put up with it because I love the art."

Part of Lee's bad experiences came when she was working on the dubbed version of *Digimon*. As she tells it, Lee was writing, directing and acting on the show, took a two week break for a wedding and a honeymoon, then returned to find she had been replaced. Lee, who still liked her *Digimon* work, offered to complete her work for free, but the dub's producers refused, she said. What eased that disappointment was that Lee was also working at the same time on the *Outlaw Star* dub. "*Outlaw Star* is very close to my heart and it was a big part of my life. It was a wild year. I was directing *Digimon* in the daytime and *Outlaw Star* at night, and that was the year I was planning my wedding. It's a really tough thing to find the energy for recording that late at night, except getting up at seven the next morning and having to work a nine hour shift is a challenge."

Lee is best known for her breakthrough role as Vanessa in *Robotech* and her portrayal of Faye Valentine in *Cowboy Bebop*. At the time of C-Kon she was hoping the Cartoon Network would pick up the pilot of the *Low Brow* show in which she appeared with actor David Lucas, *Bebop*'s Spike, and turn it into a series. "It was a hilarious show," Lee said about the Madhouse-animated sendup on giant robots, created by George Krstic and Jody Schaeffer. And Lee also continued to hope that someone, somewhere would broadcast the *Tonde Buurin* series on which she had worked, a show also known as *Superpig*, that was shelved when a producer ran out of money. Ironically, *Tonde Burrin* appears to have been finished before another show, *Hare Tokidoki Buta*, was dubbed into *Tokyo Pig* and released on the ABC Family Channel in the U.S.. Such are the ways of voice acting, Lee told fans at C-Kon. "There is a nasty side," she said. "When the inevitable "how do you get into voice acting" question comes up, I tell people that it's a really tough, tough field. Everyone in L.A. is transient there because they want to get a break. What I'm not looking for is favoritism, I'm looking for a chance. Few people get through it and keep working."

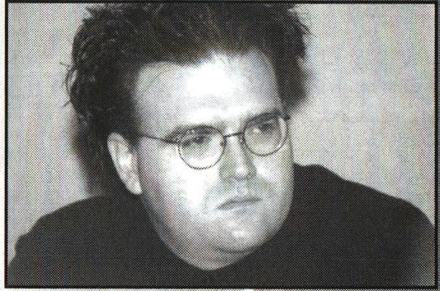
Lee is one of the actors who says that anime dubbing, with its need to match on-screen lip movements, is far harder than recording original voice tracks for original animation — but dubbing pays less than original acting, union or non-union. She feels that dub actors work harder at synching their lines to anime lip flaps than do the Japanese originals, but English-speaking fans usually don't notice that flaw because they aren't accustomed to the subtleties of Japanese speech patterns.

Beyond the politics and techniques of anime dubbing, the shows' characters carry the day and make a series popular. That was the case with *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, discussed at C-Kon by three of the show's English-language principals — Tiffany Grant, voice of Asuka; Tristan MacAvery, voice of Gendo; and Keith Burgess of Manga Entertainment, which released the English-language version of the *Evangelion* movies.

Grant has said that Asuka was her favorite dub role, and maybe she didn't realize how much the role meant to her until she first saw the *End of Evangelion* battle where Asuka battles a flock of production Evas while Shinji hides in a hangar. "When I first saw the *End of Evangelion*, the main thing was that I felt very angry," said Grant. "I internalized Asuka so much that I was taking it very personally. I was screaming at the TV at Shinji saying "Get off your ass, help me," and I wasn't saying "help Asuka," I was saying "help me." I really hated Shinji then."

Grant then took a stab at explaining the series' characters. "I think that Shinji is what Hideaki Anno is and Asuka is what Anno wanted to be — I look at them as two sides of the same person." While Grant said she liked the TV episode ending of *Evangelion* better than the movies, MacAvery thought they were compatible. "What I thought was that Anno made good on his threat that if you didn't like my first ending I'll make something more confusing," MacAvery said. He also felt that the 25th and 26th episodes of the *Evangelion* TV series could be seen as a portion of the post apocalyptic dialogue that takes up much of the final sequence of *End of Evangelion*.

Burgess' view of the movies was less philosophical. "When I watched it thought "I have no idea how we're going to do this — should we have been hired?" It didn't answer any questions for me, it just raised more questions."

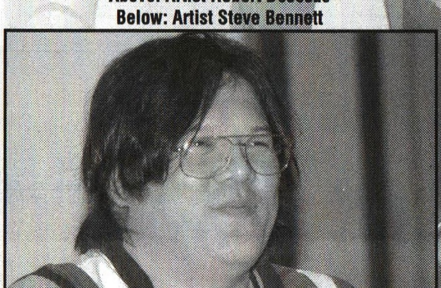


Artist and actor Rosearik Rikki Simons

Actor Tiffany Grant

Actor Tristan MacAvery

Above: Artist Robert DeJesus
Below: Artist Steve Bennett



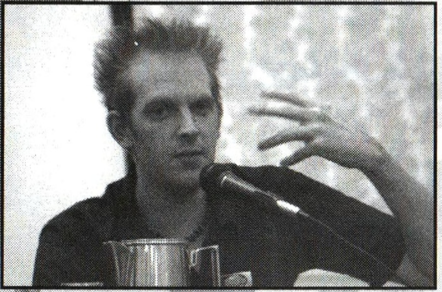
by Kevin Lillard

OHAYO CON

Hellsing costumers

Actor Stephanie Nadolny

Actor Tiffany Grant



Above: Actor Chris Patton
Below: Actor Deb Rabbai

One week after Ohio State beat Miami of Florida in the Fiesta Bowl, Columbus, Ohio got its reward for winning the national college football championship — an anime convention.

Well, maybe there wasn't any connection between the game and the convention, but a lot of the costumers were in Buckeye red, white and black; *Inu-Yasha*, Arucard from *Hellsing*, Mirelle from *Noir*, Haruko from *FLCL*. Even manga artist Mio Odagi, one of the guests of honor, wore red and white. The color schemes were just coincidental, of course. The 2,000 people who went to Ohayocon wanted an anime weekend, not football, and they got just what they wanted.

The winter convention had a big gathering of English-language voice actors. One actor was a newcomer to conventions, Vic Mignogna, a professional musician who also acts in AD Vision dubs. An actor needs a sense of rhythm so he can hit the marks and match the onscreen lip flaps. No surprise, then, that musicians and actors with musical theater experience often are good dub actors. "Even in the post-production side, some of the best editors are musicians," Mignogna said. "There is a "beat" in a scene. They can produce a mood of excitement or a lethargic mood, based on the tempo or speed that you cut the scene." Some accomplished stage and movie actors — and some aspiring actors — seem intimidated in the dubbing booth. Mignogna said there's no room or time for that. "When it comes to the point that your flesh is ripping apart and you're screaming bloody murder that's the most fun to me. There's that self conscious side, but you have to let go of it."

Stephanie Nadolny, who provides the *Dragon Ball* voices of Goku and teen Gokan, got over the self-conscious part a long time ago. She told how she was dubbing a sequence as Goku where she had to make running sounds "I kept running and breathing and I nearly got out of breath — it was like I really ran. Then Goku took this flying leap and jumped into the water, and I was really into it and I made this noise like I was jumping into the water. I don't know why I did it — it was fun — and the director went "What did you do... did you just make the water noise, the splash?" I was on the floor cracking up — I had never done this before. The director said "There's no need to make the sound effects.""

Women often perform boys' voices in animation in Japan and in the U.S., where the *Dragon Ball* voices of Goku and teen Gokan were played by Stephanie Nadolny. "My main characters have been boys," Nadolny said. "Having a female's voice doing the voice of a small child makes sense." The reasons are that boys' voices will turn lower as they grow up, a disadvantage in a long-running series, and experienced female actors usually are better performers than boys. "It's standard now. Even in *Fruits Basket*, for a boy's character they started auditioning female actors. I don't know any boy characters at our studio (Funimation in Texas) that are voiced by males." That doesn't make it easy for the female actor when the boy has to sound rough and tough. For the *Dragon Ball* rendition of one boy's voice, "When I was speaking they had me reference Clint Eastwood. I was in so much pain afterwards... when you have to sound like a young boy you don't want to sound like a cutesy little boy."

Even veteran actor Tiffany Grant has "done boys" in AD Vision dubs. "A lot of times people don't recognize it's me," she said. One place where adult female actors can have an advantage over boys is in handling the demands of the dubbing studio, where lines have to be delivered convincingly and with the precise timing needed to match the original animation's lip flaps. And not every role is cheerful. "If you're working on something more serious like *Noir* or *Evangelion* the mood is more serious," said Grant. "It's more unsettling if you're doing a scene where there's death or suffering."

Chris Patton, who has moved to lead roles in ADV dubs in recent years, goes to extremes to get the roles right. In *Rahxephon*, when he learned he was getting a lead role, spent weeks researching the character so he'd be absolutely ready. Then there were the recording sessions for *Spriggan*, where his character had a big fight scene in which he's losing badly, on the ground and bleeding from the mouth. "They laid wood on the floor and had me lay on the floor, and gave me water. During the scene I let the water out of my mouth so it sounded like I was hemorraging." One extreme that Patton doesn't take is trying to match the original Japanese actor, although he happened to sound a lot like the original Daley Wong in *Bubble Gum Crisis 2040*.

Debbie Rabbai, who moved from improv work to voice acting, told a story about an actor who had never handled a dubbing role before who had a little trouble with the script. A scene where the actor had been running contained lines of dialogue followed by the instruction, "pants," where the actor was supposed to sound as if he was out of

Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com, www.ohayocon.com.

OHAYO CON (Continued)

breath. This actor, experienced on stage, but not in the recording booth, took the instruction literally and shouted "Pants!" One of Rabbai's stories is told about herself, when she took on a "sort of hentai show" where most of her dialogue was "oh," "ooh" "um." A greater challenge was Rabbai's role in *Boogie Pop Phantom* where she played a disturbed teenaged girl who is constantly calling for her brother. Each line of "Brother?" in that well-written show had to be delivered with a different emotion, inflection and meaning.

Monica Rial often speaks in a normal high-pitched voice, then switches to a lower-pitched, calmer sound, but sings in an alto register — much like the changes she needs to make in her dub roles where she never sounds the same. Her Hyatt in *Excel Saga* has subtle, but important differences from her Kirika in *Noir*. "I've done things that are so opposite from my own speaking voice," Rial said. "How they know I can do a 1000 year old weasel or a 29 year old ass kicker I don't know." Part of the trick is to physically act out the role in the booth through body movements. In the baseball series *Princess Nine*, someone created a makeshift baseball bat out of tape and spare scripts, with the idea that the actors would grip and swing the "bat" when dubbing the baseball sequences. Of course, Rial managed to swing too hard, hit the microphone and knock the scripts to the floor.

Artists also were part of the Ohio show, led by the married manga artist couple of Mio Odagi and Shimpei Itoh. Odagi works on childrens' books while Itoh creates action stories. "Originally I wanted to do childrens books like Dr. Seuss and the Berenstain Bears," she said. "That didn't work out, so I ended up doing manga. I like doing stories for elementary school students." Itoh, who created the *Hyper Dolls* manga and was hired to draw the *Moldiver* manga after the anime became popular, said "The stuff I like to do is action and mecha. I wanted to be a manga artist since I was little, and many of the ideas I use are things I thought up when I was young; I might be a little immature and haven't grown up. I like stories about tanks, monsters and high school girls — It was what I came up with when I hit puberty."

Odagi first came to the attention of anime convention fans in North America when she was part of Upping Bang's Studio Do-Do. "Ever since I was little I was into anime, but when I got into middle school I realized the anime originated from manga," she said. Odagi started drawing her own manga in high school and submitted them to manga magazines. In Japan, manga publishers recruit their new artists by holding contests and often hiring the winners. After winning some awards, Odagi thought she could make a living as a manga artist. Following her graduation from high school, Odagi considered attending a manga artists' school and was earning money for the tuition when she was introduced to Ippongi Bang. "She was looking for an assistant, and I thought "Why pay to learn when I can work and get paid at the same time?" So I became her assistant, then I became independent."

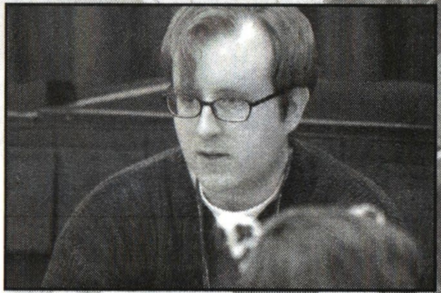
Itoh made his mark in the manga world through a method that is the sort of straightforward thing that seems impossible in the U.S. comics industry; he found a person who took him seriously and got a job. "I took my art to a publishing company and I had an editor assigned to me. Then I thought "hey maybe I have some talent". In Japan it's not hard to become a professional artist — what is hard is to make a living as an artist." When an artist gets a hot series the work can become lucrative, but the workload to feed the manga weeklies can be so intense that the best artists hire assistants to complete each episode. That hard work can mean exposure to audiences unthinkable in the U.S. after the mid 90's comics bust; the top manga weeklies sell three million copies a week and even mid-level titles have more sales than the top American comics.

The most popular artist at Ohayocon may have been Fred Gallagher, who draws the online *Megatokyo* comic. Gallagher said he has a habit of quickly designing characters for his online comic. "That's okay," he said, but he added it's not easy to get a character's special look just right every time. There are artists who draw their characters to certain ways based on their personalities, but Gallagher enjoys playing his characters against type. "I work a lot on contrasts. The character's behavior can seem to be out of sync with the way the character looks," he said. What about those background faces that show up in every series? "Even characters that will be in the backgrounds and never seen again, I like to give some thought to them. Sometimes you'll get these characters who come to life and have a larger role." Gallagher suggested to budding artists not be too shy about showing their work to others. "I've gone from the thought that my art had no worth whatsoever to thinking that art is communication — if you don't show it to other people you will never know what they think."

Actor Monica Rial

Artist Mio Odagi

Artist Shimpei Itoh



Above: Artist Fred Gallagher; Below: Rial & Patton give a birthday bear to ADV's Matt Greenfield

by Kevin Lillard

USHI CON

Dr. Susan Napier of the Univ. of Texas

Actor Tiffany Grant

Actor Stephanie Nadolny

Above: Actor Monica Rial
Below: AD Vision producer Janice Williams

As you ride away from the Austin, Texas airport, you see a plain and dreary landscape. The highways are lined with buildings that look old and worn out, and you wonder what the fuss about Austin is all about. Then you cross a big highway and there it is, the skyline of a modern state capital marked with skyscrapers, towers and the huge sports palaces of the University of Texas. In the midst of this moneyed development was the Marriott hotel used by anime fans to hold Ushicon.

This second anime convention in Austin had a group of familiar faces as guests, people who made some intriguing observations about their roles in the anime business. It was the site of an interesting faceoff of sorts between the two Texas companies that are at the top of the translated anime industry. The weather was warm and dry, the crowds enthusiastic and polite.

As the fans who attended the convention filed into the dealers' room and snapped pictures of cosplayers, they may not have known that they were being observed for one of the few academic studies of anime fandom. People who went into a panel discussion on the nature of fans were greeted by a college professor who handed them questionnaires on what they really think about anime. Susan Napier, who teaches at the department of Asian studies at the University of Texas, is interested in how anime fandom is evolving.

"This is a whole different way of identifying what it is to be a citizen of the late 20th century," said Napier at a Saturday Ushicon panel. Napier is so interested in what anime fandom means that she's studying this subculture, and handed out questionnaires at the panel. In looking at anime fans she's met at conventions and schools, Napier has found some fascinating differences between this fandom and what passes for the average American - but it also shows the different ways that the Western world has reacted to Japan. Napier started her presentation with a video of Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado" and followed it with a music video based on *Grave of the Fireflies*, which demonstrated the differences.

For Westerners to have a special appreciation of Japanese art isn't new, as Napier pointed out in noting how Japanese styles were fashionable in 19th-century France. What is different is the nature of the fans who follow anime at the turn of the new century. They tend to be young and getting younger, as Napier discovered when she observed the anime enthusiasm of high school students in New York. And while there's a college crowd of fans, older people also are interested. "Most anime fans tend to be more liberal than the mainstream," said Napier. "They tend to be less religious, more environmentally conscious, more inclined to vote Democrat." But the fans aren't all the same. Napier has found that anime fandom comes from many walks of life and races.

The anime fans questioned by Napier said they're attracted to anime because "It's different. It's not Hollywood. It's darker and more adult." The fans use the phrase "cool" a lot in describing their art. Those fans aren't conformists. They seem to see themselves as somewhat different from the mainstream. "I haven't met that many cheerleaders who are into anime," she said. Rather, anime fans tend to be into arts and music and drawing. "They're not part of the going to law school and medical school culture, although that may be changing." What makes it cool? It's exotic and appeals to what people want to become. "People always want something different and new — that's part of human nature. People into anime aren't finding something exotic as much as they're finding themselves in anime."

Women in music, television and film often say it's hard to get good roles that aren't stereotypes. Women in anime often get the best roles because the most vibrant characters are female, but they also work to produce the shows. At Ushicon, four women met to discuss their jobs with fans: actors Tiffany Grant, Stephanie Nadolny, Monica Rial, and producer Janice Williams of AD Vision. The women said they take advantage of the great female roles and characters that anime offers, but they don't feel much impact of the more mysoginistic aspects of the medium.

The actors were asked about the strongest and most subservient characters they've played. Grant mentioned Ryoko Subaru and Khomei Sawaguchi as examples of strong characters, but her thoughts still came back to Asuka in *Evangelion*, who was strong in some ways while weak in others. Playing this imperfect character meant some unique acting challenges when Grant returned to Asuka for the *Evangelion* movies. When she

Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com, www.ushicon.com.

USHI CON (Continued)

recorded the scene where a seemingly comatose Asuka repeats the phrase "I don't want to die," "I was almost completely rigid, but I was shaking, I was so focused. The first take I was shaking and my watch hit the music stand, and that ruined the take. I don't know how many times I had to say "I don't want to die." It starts at this almost inaudible point, and I had to raise the volume to the point I had to do this huge throat-ripping scream."

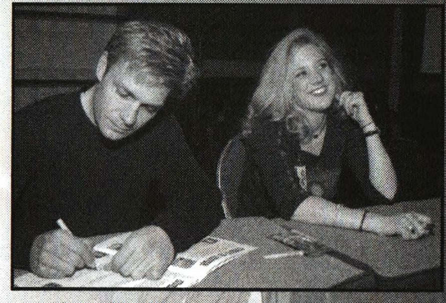
Nadolny's best-known characters are the male Gohan and Goku from *Dragon Ball*, which are nothing but if not strong. But event *Dragon Ball*, which can seem like an endless series of pro-wrestling-style fights, has its sentimental parts that draw emotions from the admittedly sentimental Nadolny. She voiced Gohan in a battle scene with Cel and one of the series' many androids. The android had its head knocked off, and the head was speaking to Gohan when Cel crushed the head. "Gohan freaked out. That was a very tender, emotional scene, and when I had to scream I had my eyes shut — I wasn't watching the scene. It ended up being some of my best work, because I put my heart into it."

Rial likes the mixture of intensity, fantasy and humanity in her roles. "I play a lot of strong characters but all of my characters have issues," Rial said. "Izumi was very strong but she broke down. Kirika was very strong, but she didn't know why she was strong and that made her break down. They have real emotions — they have real girl feelings. That is really cool in that respect." But some of those characters are portrayed as sex objects in a way that makes her wonder, such as her Princess Nine character which is introduced in a baseball scene with closeups of her bust and behind.

One of the more infamous features of ADV Films releases is the "jiggle counter" on some films which are full of so-called "fan service." While the feature may be aimed at males, Williams is the person who has to create the counter, something that requires crawling frame-by-frame through each scene. She agrees that many anime girls have chests so large that they would fall over if they were real. Williams noted a series with French maids, armed with machine guns, who fell over when they were shot in positions that made their skits flip up so their panties were visible. But if anime has a reputation for providing male fan service, Williams noted there's a trend in the opposite direction of anime that shows large number of cute males for female fans. And it should be told that the same room used for that panel was packed an hour later for a yaoi discussion.

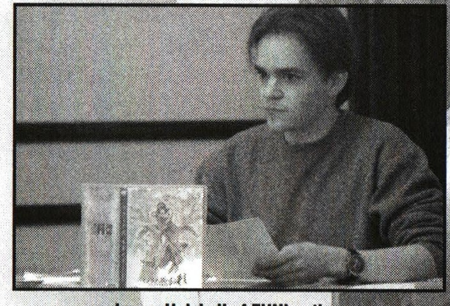
ADV is one of the two big anime importers in Texas. The company is based in Houston, but has a dubbing operation in Austin, where Ushicon was held. The other big anime company in that state is Funimation of Fort Worth, which came up big when they wanted to import *Dragon Ball* when no one else cared. At Ushicon, both companies had long lists of new releases for fans to ponder. Funimation announced at Austin that they were taking on two *Sakura Wars* OVA's, while ADV was looking forward to their pending release of the first volume of the long-awaited *Noir*.

Ushicon had a perfect weekend — with one tragic, unrelated exception. On the morning of the convention's second day, the space shuttle Columbia was scheduled to pass over Texas. Around 200 miles north of Austin, the shuttle broke up in mid air with the loss of all aboard.



Actors Vic Mignogna and Stephanie Nadolny

Actors & friends acting weird



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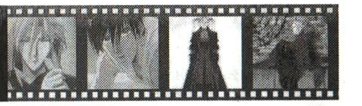
ANIME WORLD: CON & FEST

by Kevin Lillard



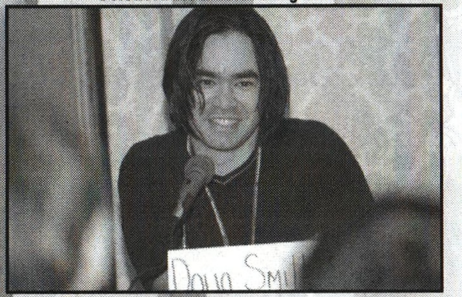
TEKKOSHOCON

***Noir* Costumers**

Actor Vic Mignogna

Actor Monica Rial

Above: Actor Deb Rabbai
Below: Artist & actor Doug Smith



Tekkoshocon was another sign of anime's gradual acceptance as another part of North American popular culture. The inaugural convention was held in late March 2003 in the hills of western Pennsylvania (and not far from West Virginia), a short drive from the steel mills that defined that area before the "new economy" took over.

While the convention was held near Cliff Mine Road in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania and had a cute steel-driving girl as its mascot, it was an event of the Internet era, not the years of mines and mills. It came a few days after *Spirited Away* won the best animated feature Oscar from the Academy of Motion Picture arts and Sciences. In the days after the convention, mainstream newspapers such as the Boston Globe, Washington Post and New York Times ran reviews of *Cowboy Bebop: The Movie*.

And just outside Pittsburgh, fans got an anime convention of their own. It wasn't a huge event, drawing around 600 people, but those people got to share in the convention experience that has spread across North America in the past decade. A sign of that enthusiasm came when a group of young women posed in *Noir* costumes with actor Monica Rial, enjoying their time with an actor from a series that had been commercially released barely a month ago.

For years, Pittsburgh-area anime fans needed to travel to Ohio, North Carolina or Virginia for a convention, but two groups decided to hold their own Pennsylvania event. One group's hopes ended when their December 2002 convention was canceled, but Tekkoshocon wasn't stopped. Not even the war in Iraq prevented fans from going to Tekkoshocon; few even glanced at the hotel TV sets tuned to CNN.

Instead, the fans hung out with a bunch of people from the North American anime industry, including a quartet of actors. Rial, who was in the middle of recording her Kirika character for the *Noir* dub, traveled north from Houston, along with Vic Mignogna, who was voicing the lead character in *Generator Gawl*. Deb Rabbai flew in from New York and Doug Smith drove in from Virginia after stopping in Maryland to pick up animator Jan Scott Frazier. Artist Robert DeJesus also was part of the show.

Tekkoshocon was a homecoming for Mignogna, who had been raised in the Pittsburgh area. He told fans about the tough work in recording sessions, including on series where he plays a "little bratty punk kid who pretends to be friends with the good guys then tries to get at them," and another series where he plays a tough guy character in armor. "If you want to learn how unpleasant it is to be a voice actor, try yelling for 20 minutes," Mignogna said. "Your head's throbbing. You've got to take it easy, and a lot of the directors are sensitive to that — they schedule the screaming sessions all first. Mignogna likes his work as Gawl in *Generator Gawl*. "Maybe it was special to me because it was the first lead I got to do." Mignogna also spoke about the challenge of his role in *Aura Battler Dunbine*. "All of the characters have an accent of one kind and this guy has an Irish-Scottish accent. It's one challenge to emote a character, but it's an extra challenge to do it with an accent." Voice acting's main complication is delivering a decent performance to the limits of the onscreen lip flaps of the animated characters. Some dub studios cue each actor's line with three beeps, but ADV doesn't. So when Mignogna took a dubbing role with another studio that uses the three beeps, "There were 500 times when I was two frames early."

After meeting two Kirika during the day, Rial said her *Noir* character is "...one of the most difficult characters because she doesn't talk." The release of ADV Films' first volume of *Noir* had some fans questioning her performance, but Rial said it was all according to plan. "In volume one she's so apprehensive, but I'm starting her out as apprehensive. As she goes along she's coming into her own." Hyatt, her *Excel* character, speaks in a similar range, but there are differences. Rial performs Hyatt in a more deliberate voice than Kirika, with a subtle separation between words. "You have to do the characters a little different so if you watched *Excel Saga* and *Noir* back to back you couldn't tell they were the same actor."

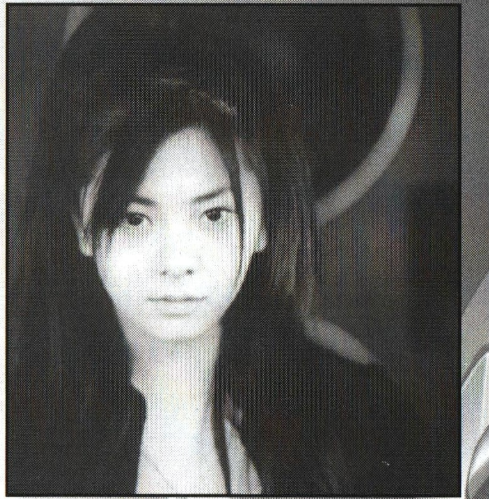
Rabbai, the improvisational actor who has found a second career as a dubbing performer, has found that her anime work has prepared her for dialogue replacement in major movies. One of the film industry's secrets is that scripts sometimes are changed after principal photography wraps and lines have been replaced, but the high-priced stars aren't available to revoice their lines. Movie producers then find other actors to record those lines, and Rabbai has handled that job in several films. While she doesn't think her voice resembles Lara Flynn Boyle's voice, Rabbai voiced a line of dialogue for the other actor.

Smith took up the "how do you become an actor" thread by telling how he started as an actor. When Smith was a graphic designer at ADV Films, a producer ran out of voices and asked Smith to fill in. Smith impressed the producers enough to go from bit parts to a couple of leads, including Kintaro Oe in *Golden Boy*. "If you can listen to what the director wants and learn how to express yourself, you'll go far. You'll hear the same voices over and over again because the director likes them." The other actors repeated some previously mentioned truths: the only way to grow as an actor is to keep acting — especially on stage — and the best way to get dub roles is to live in the areas where the studios are located. The actors said they knew of at least one person who moved from California to Houston to get roles in ADV dubs.

Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com, www.tekkoshocon.com.

THE MODERN JAPANESE MUSIC DATABASE (PART 21)

Home Page 11: Mai Kuraki



Mai Kuraki
delicious way

The J-pop world works like popular culture everywhere: once something proves popular, imitations pop up overnight like mushrooms after the rain. This is the door through which Kuraki has both achieved fame and been trapped, as the doppelganger of Hikaru Utada (see last issue).

Mai was born in Tokyo on 82/10/28 and debuted at the tender age of 16, first in the USA in October, then in December in Japan. She records in Boston and lists artists like Mariah Carey, Lauren Hill, and Janet Jackson as influences. Hobbies include playing the piano and drawing, the latter giving her an attraction to anime, in which *Detective Conan* is her favorite. This is hardly surprising, given that she has contributed two ending themes to the series: *Start My Life*, and *Always*, the latter of which also appears in the *Detective Conan* movie. Her other main media appearance is in the NHK morning drama *Audrey*. Due to her age, she is well protected by her handlers, and pretty much avoids radio and TV appearances, largely due to studying for university entrance exams, though her making the grade to the prestigious Richineiken University may change that situation.

Now, for those of you who have read the previous article on Utada, you can see what's coming. By chance or design, these two girls are very similar. This has been latched on to by the star hungry Japanese pop media and turned into an all out warfare that has spilled over into magazines, TV shows and fans on the Internet. It began immediately when Kuraki's first CD, "Delicious Way," broke Utada's record breaking first release, by selling 3-million copies its first week out. The comparisons in their influences, singing, age, style, and way they appeared in the industry, etceteras, all became immediate targets for media chewing, resulting in a huge amount of rumor and gossip. Things reached a head when comedy duo Downtown, the hosts of *Hey, Hey, Hey, Music Champ*, (see *PA* 60) directly confronted Utada about all this on their TV show. Utada made a brief response, expressing surprise, which grew into much more as it was spread around, much like how a sentence changes in a game of "telephone." Eventually, the molehill became a mountain, in which Utada had allegedly expressed great shock and consternation that her image and style had been ripped off, and that Kuraki was nothing, but a mirror of herself.

Utada and her handlers have denied this and claim that any alleged competition between the two artists is media hype. This exploding of comments into more than they are is common in Japanese media, but it doesn't seem to have hurt either singer. In fact, it appears to have significantly heightened popular awareness of Kuraki. This is a good thing, as Utada and Kuraki, while overlapping, are distinct and not the mirror images of one another that the media has painted. Both women put out solid R&B based ballads and dance music, but they each have their own vocal sound and edge in their grooves. I find, in general, that Utada has a more richly toned voice with a wider true vocal range, but Kuraki's voice strikes me as more emotive and intimate. Another difference is that whereas Utada can clearly hit certain notes, Kuraki relies on falsetto to do the same, though not in the off key way into which it can fall when misused.

While a subjective choice, I personally have found I listen to Kuraki more than Utada, and their sales seem to say that a lot of others like her better, as well. This is interesting in that it has not translated over into Western attention or Internet action. In both of these areas, Utada is still out front. With plans in the works to bring Kuraki to an English audience, however, this may soon change. Like Utada, she can sing well in English, so with both women beginning to edge into the Western market, we may see a replay here of what happened in Japan.

In the end, I don't see any reason to make a choice between these two artists. If you like this genre of music, or already like Mai or Hikaru, you will also enjoy the other, so don't limit yourself. Between them, they have put out four of the most solid R&B dance discs on the Japanese market; all worthwhile additions to your collection.

Official We Site: www.mai-kuraki.com (music samples)

CDs: Delicious Way, GZCA-1039; Perfect Crime, GZCA-5001; Baby I Like (as Mai.K in USA/Bip Records); 4 12-inch remix LPs.

Video: First Cut, BMVR-2001 VHS, BMDR-2001 DVD.

Next: Home Page 12: Morning Musume.

INTERVIEW: AMY HOWARD-WILSON

GP: Amy, thanks for taking the time to chat with us.

AHW: It's nice to be here — thank you!

GP: What were you doing before you were cast in *Star Blazers*?

AHW: I graduated from The American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City 1975 and had been working in show biz related office jobs... I needed to get some experience with how the business worked "behind the camera" so to speak. I also had the extreme good fortune to win 10K on the *$20,000 Pyramid*!

GP: How did you come to be cast as Nova?

AHW: In 1979 I was working at the Weist-Barron School for TV and commercial acting. A dear lady casting director named Kit Carter called the school looking for non-union talent to audition for a newly imported Japanese animated series... it was truly a case of being in the right place at the right time!

GP: Tell me about your first impressions voice acting?

AHW: *Star Blazers* was my first paying job as an actress and it was a completely new experience for me. At the Academy, I'd been trained in stage technique with all of the accompanying courses — dance, fencing, voice, make-up... Being in a recording studio was totally foreign! It was a wonderful learning experience.

GP: Everybody has a favorite little story to tell. Tell us yours.

AHW: Well, this story takes a bit of setting up... Between the time *Star Blazers* was taken off the air back in 1980/81, I had no idea how many people had seen it, if they liked it, because there were no VA credits and no one knew who we were. Fast forward to 1997 when Bernie, one of my brothers-in-law, had been talking with his 2 daughters — who were, and still are, huge anime fans — about how Aunt Amy had done *Star Blazers* way back when... they went searching on the net and the next thing I know I'm getting a phone call saying "you won't believe what we just found!" *Star Blazers* websites by the dozen! I emailed one of the page owners, who passed the word and I started getting email back and little by little we were building a network... Those emails led to an introduction to Dave Merrill, the convention chairman for Anime Weekend Atlanta... it is now 5 years and 20 cons later and I still find myself shaking my head in disbelief. I have been blessed with worlds most wonderful fans and best of all, I met the man I would marry — David G. Wilson, III. Plus, over the last few years, we've managed to locate Ken Meserrol, Tom Tweedy and Eddie Allen — the voice actors for Wildstar, Venture and Desslok!!!

GP: Why do you think *Star Blazers* is still so popular after all of this time?

AHW: *Star Blazers* is a wonderful story with believable characters and situations with which everyone can identify on some level — and you can watch it with your kids!!! There is a genuine respect for *Star Blazers* all over the world and I'm extremely proud to be a part of it. One of the nicest things I've been told is how everyone would run home after school to be sure and catch the first few notes of the theme!

GP: What have you been up to lately?

AHW: I'm narrating and producing 2 audio books! I met the author, Wendy Laing, on a British actor fan site — it turns out she and I (and both of our husbands named Dave) are fans of many of the same British TV shows... our target date for publication is June 1, 2002 for *Sir Henry, The Knight In Space* and *Captain Angus, The Lighthouse Ghost*. Please visit my page http://home.earthlink.net/~amysvoice/ for further details!!!

GP: What advice would you offer to aspiring voice actors?

AHW: If you're in school, stay there — you won't get anywhere in this business if you're not willing to make a commitment and finish what you start. Be very clear about what your goals are — don't pursue acting as a career with the idea that you're going to be famous overnight and be a millionaire. Acting is a whole lot of fun, but it is a business. You must be prepared to treat it as such.

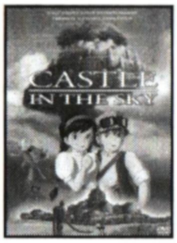
GP: Is there anything you would like to say to your fans?

AHW: I consider my fans a blessing. *Star Blazers* means the world to me and it is an honor to know that you value it as I do.

GP: Thanks so much for your time!

AHW: You're more than welcome, Thank you!

CASTLE IN THE SKY



This is Hayao Miyazaki's third movie (the first two were *Lupin III: Castle Of Cagliostro* and *Nausicaa Of The Valley Of The Wind*). As in nearly all his works, *Castle In The Sky* (whose real title is *Tenku No Shiro Laputa*, lit. "Laputa, Castle In The Sky"– Disney omitted the "Laputa" in the title for obvious, but questionable reasons) celebrates the joy of flight, and shows Miyazaki's immense culture – this movie's story being inspired by one of the chapters of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's travels*. Done in 1986, it is a beautifully animated, joyous, adrenaline-pumping romp in a world where a little boy can be a hero, beat the bad guys, realize his dream AND save a beautiful thirteen year-old Princess. And all this without being preachy in the least. What else can you ask from a movie?! Cf. PA #72: 32.

Buena Vista, Cat. #25340, Multilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.99, PG.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4.5** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **4.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4.5**

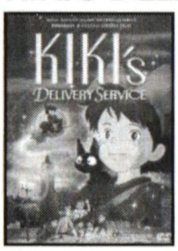
GENESHAFT, VOL. 1

Although we have seen this plot a thousand times (the "Cute-Girls-in-Tight-Suits-Fight-Aliens-And-Save-The-World" plot), *Geneshaft* is inventive in both its visuals and its soundtrack. The designs are superb (the Shaft mecha, while anything but visually pleasing, is quite unique) and the animation is extremely crisp, thanks to the good use of a new method, which mixes 3D CGI and 2D animation, which we had first seen used (with great success) in the *Zoids* series. However, what we really like about this series is its soundtrack: pulse-pounding heavy metal! Added to the series' techno atmosphere, it gives you the impression that you are watching a clip from the old 1980's *Heavy Metal* movie! In short, if you liked *Gunbuster*, *Vandread* and *Heavy Metal*, then *Geneshaft* will please you to no end! Cf. PA #70: 64-65.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #2100, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE



Some people might be surprised by the relatively low ratings this movie gets. The reason is not because it is not an extraordinary movie, but because it is, in our humble opinion, the least extraordinary of Miyazaki's movies. In short, it eclipses most other animated movies, EXCEPT the other Miyazaki movies. However, just why it is not as good as say, *Mononoke Hime* or *Totoro*, is hard to explain by something else than "It feels like his attention wasn't as there as in the other movies". Or maybe just because it is Miyazaki's most "ordinary" work. Mind you, *Kiki* IS a great movie. It just isn't as great as Miyazaki's other movies. This DVD contains two discs: the movie and a bonus disc containing the entire movie in storyboards. A must for any animation fan!

Buena Vista, Cat. #25341, Multilingual DVD, 105 min., $29.99, G.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **4** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

MACROSS, VOL. 1-3

This is one of the classics a lot of people were waiting for! While a lot of us (and we do mean a lot!) have seen the highly modified *Robotech*™ version of *Macross*, not many have seen the real thing. In the original, Hikaru (Rick) is not as dumb, Misa (Lisa) is not as whiny and Minmay knows how to sing! This is the show that made Haruhiko Mikimoto and Shoji Kawamori household names in the anime fandom of all continents and made mecha freaks believe that a plane CAN transform in flight without disintegrating! The animation is not that great (the first episodes could even be considered badly animated. However, the later episodes were much better), but it was *Macross*' designs, music, story and character development who made it a legend. A must buy!

AnimEigo, Cat. #AV001-151/2/3, Subtitled DVD, 100 min. ea., $24.95 ea., PG (Violence).

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

.HACK//SIGN, VOL. 1: LOGIN

This is one of our favorite series of the last five years. However, action amateurs could be a little disappointed, as the only thing the characters do is talk! There are some short fight scenes (after all, "The World" is a kind of *AD&D* virtual game), but the series' core is HEAVY character development. This is not really surprising since the series was created and supervised by Kazunori Ito (*Patlabor, Ghost In The Shell*) and Koichi Mashimo (*Noir*), while the superb character designs are by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto (*Evangelion, Nadia*). Quite a team! The magnificent soundtrack, by Yuki Kajiura, is one of the best we have heard in a while and perfectly fits the series' atmosphere. If you like your *AD&D* games on the intellectual side, *Dot Hack//SIGN* is for you! Cf. PA #75: 32-41.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #2210/11, Bilingual DVD, 125 min. ea., $29.98 ea., 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

KAI DOH MARU

For one rare occasion, we will give high marks to a work only because of its visual qualities. While *Kai Doh Maru*'s story is something we have seen a hundred times in anime, its visual style and atmosphere are quite unique. The story takes place during the Heian era (794 - 1185) and the animators, no less than Production IG and IG Plus (*Ghost In The Shell*, *Jinroh*), decided to reproduce the style of the artwork in vogue during the Heian period. Hence, the very pale colors (no, your DVD machine is NOT broken!) and designs that are almost stylized. The story is short and ends rather abruptly, but this one is to enjoy with your eyes. Watch out for the graphic violence, though...

Manga Entertainment, Cat. #MANGA4138-2, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. (50 min. + 25 min. Bonus), $24.95, 17+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD, VOL. 1-3

Like the original *Macross* TV series, *Kimagure Orange Road* has been a fan favorite for more than fifteen years. And just like *Macross*, what made it famous are its solid story, its endearing characters and its wonderful soundtrack. And, just like *Macross*, it presented us with the complex love life of three characters. However, this time, they are only about fifteen years-old and their (often funny) war consists in trying to understand each other and make the right choices. There is Kyosuke, the indecisive klutz, Hikaru, the over-enthusiastic, but not as dumb as she seems, girl next door and mysterious and temperamental Madoka (the dark haired, green-eyed beauty), who has always been the most popular of the three. If you want to remember how wonderful (and scary!) being fifteen was, then you should look into *Orange Road*, especially now that you can get it in DVD!

AnimEigo, Cat. #AV002-101/2/3, Subtitled DVD, 100 min. ea., $24.95, 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **4.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

SPIRITED AWAY

What could we say that has not been said on this Oscar-winning movie that people like Roger Ebert and such have not said before. The latest work from master Hayao Miyazaki, it transcends all barriers (even cultural and THAT is a challenge!) as it plunges us in the rather "interesting" life of a ten year-old girl lost in a world where she has to adapt to be able to get out. Brilliant animation (this is Miyazaki's first all computer work), wonderful and very exotic designs and a great story make this one a masterpiece. This DVD contains two discs: the movie and a bonus disc full of very interesting goodies. Miyazaki's next movie should be released next year and we cannot wait to see what the master has concocted for us this time!

Buena Vista, Cat. #29781, Multilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.99, PG.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **5** Soundtrack: **4** Story: **4.5** Translation: **4** Average: **4.5**

Unless stated otherwise, all reviews are by Martin Ouellette.

AI YORI AOSHI, VOL. 2

Based on a manga by Kou Fumizuki, *Ai Yori Aoshi* recounts the love story of Kaoru and Aoi, two young people promised to each other long ago by their rich family. However, Kaoru is not willing to go back to his estranged family, even if he dearly loves Aoi. Moreover, the bunch of cute girls in the house don't make things easy for him. *Ai Yori Aoshi* does not seem original, yet it does have a very unique flavor. And the animation is beautiful... Cf. PA #75: 47, 52-54.

Pioneer, Cat. #11939, Bilingual DVD, 120 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3.5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

ARJUNA, VOL. 4

This volume contains the last two episodes of the series, plus a ton of extras. Surprisingly, *Arjuna* was created and directed by Shoji Kawamori (*Macross, Escaflowne*), a man whose name is more easily connected with giant robots than with ecological tales. While Kawamori takes the scenic route to arrive to his message, it becomes quite clear in the end: we are one with our world. Not a masterpiece by any means, but not bad either... Cf. PA #69: 63-65; #73: 43; #75: 48.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #2213, Bilingual DVD, 70 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **4** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

DRAGONBALL: THE PATH TO POWER

From what we understand, this is one of the latest *Dragon Ball* animations. It recounts the story of Goku, Bulma and the others from the very beginning up to the end of the Red Ribbon Army story arc, changing some parts and omitting others for the sake of fitting a long story into a less than 100 minutes format. It is still pretty funny, though, and the animation is very nice. A must for *DB* fans!

FUNimation, Cat. #FN-05073, Bilingual DVD, 82 min., $29.95, PG (Violence, Nudity, Mature Situations).

Designs: **4** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

GREAT DANGAIOH, VOL. 1-3

Well, this sure ain't the first *Dangaioh*! While it was NOT a masterpiece of anime, it still had beautiful designs by Toshihiro (now Toshiki) Hirano for the characters and Shoji Kawamori and Studio Nue (*Macross*) for the mecha, as well as very nice animation. This new opus has none of the grandeur of the original, which is somehow sad, as lots of older fans were actually looking forward to a good follow-up...

Viz Video, Cat. #DGD01/2/3, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. (DGD01)/ 75 min., $24.98 ea., 13+.

Designs: **3** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **2.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

ARGENTO SOMA, VOL. 2

This beautifully animated show features the design work of people as famous as Shuko Murase (*Gundam Wing, Street Fighter*), Kimitoshi Yamane (*Macross, Escaflowne*) and Hirotoshi Sano (*Nazca, Bounty Dog*). The story is a little hard to follow, but it hints at a rather interesting ending. Much like *Rahxephon*, it could be compared, in feel, to *Evangelion*, but is superior to it in its overall quality. Amateurs of rather weird mecha designs should like this one. Cf. PA #75: 47.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. 2251, Bilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

CRYING FREEMAN, VOL. 2

Vol. 2: A Taste For Revenge. Freeman (Lon Tayan [Dragon Sun] in Chinese) and Emu (Fu Ching-Lan [Tiger Orchid] in Chinese) continue their reign as masters of the 108 Dragons, the most powerful of the Hong Kong Mafia cartel. This DVD contains episodes 3 and 4 of the saga of *Freeman.* Lots of blood, lots of violence and lots of ugly (and often strange) bad guys. It is very similar to the manga, so if you liked it, you will very probably like this animated version. Not for kids... Cf. PA #76: 54.

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DCF-002, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 17+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **2.5** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

G-GUNDAM COLLECTOR'S BOX, VOL. 2-3

These two DVD boxes contain episodes #13 to 24 (box #2) and #25 to 36 (Box #3). In these episodes, Domon must fight his friends and even his beloved master if he is to survive. The God Gundam ("Burning Gundam" in the English version) also arrives. While more a *Street Fighter* than a *Gundam*, *G-Gundam* is still entertaining and keeps your interest for the duration. Fun and NOT to be taken seriously... Cf. PA #74: 17-29, 52.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #2143/4, Bilingual; DVD, 300 min. ea., $49.98 ea., 13+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

HAMTARO, VOL. 1-2

This is SO cute, it nearly made me lose consciousness because of high blood sugar. While an adult might only find it ridiculously "over-cute", little kids love it (I have seen its devastating effect myself). Actually, I found it much better than *Pokemon* and the dreaded *Beyblade*. It may sell merchandising like crazy, but, at least, it was not MADE to create merchandising. If you have little children at home, *Hamtaro* is a good choice!

Viz Video, Cat. #DHA01/2, Dubbed DVD, 75 min. ea., $14.98 ea., G.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **2.5** Story: **2.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

Ratings' Legend: 0 = Pathetic / 1 = Poor / 2 = Fair / 2.5 = Average / 3 = Good / 3.5 = Very Good / 4 = Excellent / 5 = Outstanding

HIS & HER CIRCUMSTANCES, VOL. 4

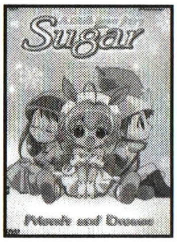
His and Her Circumstances

The more I watch this series and the more impressed I become with it. The designs and the animation are superb, but its story makes it a shame that our ratings don't have a "6". In these episodes, Arima and Yukino decide to push their relationship a bit further. The result is one of the most beautiful love scenes I have ever seen. And you don't even see a thing! A masterpiece of character development! Cf. PA #61: 43-45; #73: 43; #74: 52; #75: 49; #76: 55.

The Right Stuf, Cat. #RSDVD8014, Bilingual DVD, 150 min., $29.95, 13+.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **4** Story: **5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4.5**

LITTLE SNOW FAIRY SUGAR, VOL. 2



This is one title that deserves its name: Sugar! In this volume, our cute little apprentice Season Fairies still look for their "Twinkles". They are very happy when an Elder Fairy shows up, but it seems that he is not there to help them. Moreover, Sugar gets into a big fight with Saga because of rather unrestrained use of magic. This DVD contains episodes #5 to #8 of the series. If you like beautifully animated cuteness, then *Sugar* is for you! Waffo! Cf. PA #76: 55.

Pioneer, Cat. #12031, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 3+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3.5** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

MAHOROMATIC, VOL. 3

MahoRomatic

This DVD contains the last four episodes of this rather disappointing series. While the first episodes were a riot, the attempt to slip in a serious story was a mistake. All of Suguru's entourage (and especially Ms. Shikijo, his over-endowed and mightily horny teacher) would have been way enough to provide lots of funny situations and make an hilarious series. But even Gainax can sometimes make wrong choices it seems... Cf. PA #75: 66; #76: 56.

Pioneer, Cat. #11899, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 16+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

NOIR, VOL. 2

This volume contains episodes #6 to #9 of this stunning series. In episode 6, Kirika has to face her conscience, while Mireille, in episodes #8 and #9, has to face her own fear of a woman she met long ago: the Intoccabile, a Corsican Mafia Princess who knows no fear and no pity. Mireille will prevail against this ruthless enemy, but at a price. Be aware that the next volumes will only have three episodes each! Cf. PA #69: 68-69; #75: 47.

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DNO-002, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 15+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **4.5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

INU-YASHA, VOL. 1-3

Down the Well
Inu Yasha

The latest translated work from manga and anime superstar Rumiko Takahashi (*Ranma 1/2, Maison Ikkoku*), *Inu Yasha* pretty much retains the same basic story found in nearly all her works: an obnoxious boy and a cute, but too feisty, girl try to get things working between them. The only real difference is that *Inu Yasha* also shares traits with Takahashi's scary tales, such as *Mermaid's Scar*. If you like Takahashi's manga, then *Inu Yasha* is for you.

Viz Video, Cat. #DIY01/2/3, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea., $24.98 ea., PG (Violence).

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

LUPIN III (TV), VOL. 2

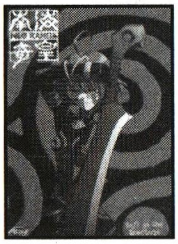
Lupin
Love Heist

This DVD contains episodes #7 to #11 of the second *Lupin III* TV series (the one on which Hayao Miyazaki worked on for a few episodes). The animation is so-so (but quite nice for the time and it respects Monkey Punch's style), but the designs and the atmosphere are pure *Lupin*. And, of course, Lupin gets to abuse Zenigata! Not as brilliant as *Castle Of Cagliostro* (we mustn't ask for too much...), but still incredibly entertaining. Cf. PA #75: 49.

Pioneer, Cat. #11946, bilingual DVD, 125 min., $24.95, 13+

Designs: **4** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **4** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

NEO RANGA, VOL. 2



This DVD contains eight 15-minute-long episodes. A wild mix of humor and tragedy, *Neo Ranga* recounts the story of three very different sisters (a kind, yet fiery soul, a snobby princess and a greedy old maid) who have inherited the responsibility for Neo Ranga, a huge monster/God from the island of Barou. Neo Ranga himself is quite benign, but there are people who would like to possess his strength or get rid of him. Interesting. Cf. PA #56: 56-57; #76: 56.

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DNE-002, Bilingual DVD, 120 min., $29.98, 15+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3.5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

PLEASE TEACHER, VOL. 1

Please Teacher!

Yet another "Dorky Boy Trapped With A Bevy Of Gorgeous Babes" show. Kei Kusanagi is a high school student with a heart condition that stunted his growth. In fact, he is 18! However, his heart will start beating faster when he has to marry his teacher, Mizuho Kazami, a beautiful alien sent by the Galaxy Federation (and a personality clone of *OMG!*'s Belldandy. They even have the same voice!)! Beautifully animated, but not as funny as the manga.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #2270, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **2.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

Unless stated otherwise, all reviews are by Martin Ouellette.

PROJECT ARMS, VOL. 1-2

If you liked *Xenon* (the 1980's manga by Masaomi Kanzaki), then *Project ARMS* could be your cup of tea. Three high school boys who have had terrible accidents received a great gift: a new limb, exactly like the old one! But what they do not know is that, in fact, these are terrible nano-technology weapons and that a secret organization, the Egregori, is after that very technology. *Project ARMS* is not very original nor greatly animated (Ryo's design is terrible...), but is still entertaining. Cf. PA#73: 60-61.

Viz Video, Cat. #DPA01/2, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea., $24.98 ea., 16+.

Designs: **3** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **2.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

RONIN WARRIORS OVAs, VOL. 1

Just like all the "Pretty Boys In Armor" shows, *Samurai Troopers*' popularity made its producers greedy, hence a slew of OVAs only made to make more cash and which do not profit the story one bit. This one is no different. It features the same characters (still designed by *Gundam Wing*'s Shuko Murase) and nearly the same animation as the TV series, as well as a story we have seen a hundred times. By the way, there are FOUR episodes on this DVD, not six. For fans only...

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #1960, Bilingual DVD, 120 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **3** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **2.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

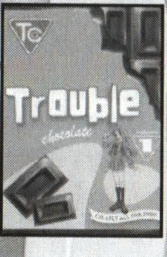
SUKEBAN DEKA

This is a rather strange OVA. Story-wise, it feels like a mix between *Wild Seven* and a shojo manga, with a beautiful, yet bad mannered girl (designed by none other that *Lodoss*' Nobuteru Yuki!) who has to choose between prison and helping a ruthless cop catch a blood-thirsty crime boss masquerading as a prom queen in an exclusive high school. The animation is far from being up to par with the designs, but *Sukeban Deka* is still fun...

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DSK-001, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $19.98, 15+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

TROUBLE CHOCOLATE, VOL. 1-2



Some people might take *Trouble Chocolate* for a vulgar copying of stuff by Rumiko Takahashi, such as *Ranma 1/2* and *Lum*, or shows like *Excel Saga* (sheer craziness), *Slayers*, etc. However, it seems to have been done as a parody, introducing so many elements of so many genres that your head begins to spin after a few episodes. There is nothing really original in there, it is just the way it is put together. Funny, but kind of "déjà-vu".

Viz Video, Cat. #DTC01/2, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. ea., $24.98 ea., 13+.

Designs: **3** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **2.5** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

RANMA 1/2 FOREVER, VOL. 1

Yet more *Ranma 1/2!* If you have seen ANY *Ranma* episode, then you know what to expect from this DVD: Ranma still becomes busty Ranma-chan, Akane still is jealous, violent and cute, etc. In this volume though, we get one surprise: the Jusenkyo guide ("There is tragic legend, VERY tragic, about a girl who drowned in spring 1,500 years ago...") has come all the way from China, but not for a charming visit. Funny, but somewhat predictable...

Viz Video, Cat. #DRRF01, Bilingual DVD, 78 min., $24.98, 13+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3**

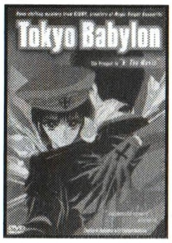
S-CRY-ED, VOL. 1

This show is a mix of many others we have seen before, but its most visible influence is definitely *Jojo's Bizarre Adventures*, as the characters use psychic powers to transform matter into their "Alter", which are very similar to *Jojo's* "Stands". The animation is nice and the characters intriguing, but there is not much originality in there. By the way, the Japanese seem rather obsessed with totalitarianism these days, as they often portrait societies that crush individuality as self-absorbed, oppressive "good guys". A self-critic, perhaps?... Cf PA#73: 64-66

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. 2360, Bilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

TOKYO BABYLON



This DVD contains both episodes of the animated version of CLAMP's famous prequel to their extraordinary ***X***. *Tokyo Babylon* recounts the adventures of Subaru, the most powerful heir of the Sumeragi family, great psychics who have been keeping Japan safe from evil forces for centuries. Since the manga was rather complicated and featured a lot of character development, a lot is missing in this animation. Still, it is very enjoyable and the designs are very close to CLAMP's manga. A must for ***X*** fans!

U.S. Manga Corps, Cat. #USMD-2281, Bilingual DVD, 95 min., $19.99, 13+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST (TV), VOL. 1

This DVD contains all four episodes of the first animated version of Kosuke Fujishima's (*Oh My Goddess!*) famous cop/humor manga. Miyuki and Natsumi, two really cute and very efficient young police ladies, meet at the Bokuto Station and become partners, solving various situations and putting their various talents to good use. Beautifully animated (the reflection work on chrome is astounding. Look Ma! No computer!) and designed, it is not, however, a masterpiece of storytelling (Fujishima can be lame in certain situations). Entertaining, but that's it.

AnimEigo, Cat. #AV002-120, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $24.95, PG.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

Ratings' Legend: 0 = Pathetic / 1 = Poor / 2 = Fair / 2.5 = Average / 3 = Good / 3.5 = Very Good / 4 = Excellent / 5 = Outstanding

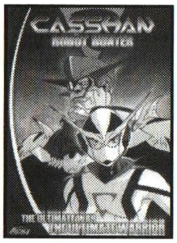
BETTERMAN, VOL. 6

This DVD contains the last four episodes of this visually cool (the character designs were very nice), but rather hard to understand series. The ending is somewhat mysterious (and catastrophic for most of the characters, to say the least!) with its mystic gibberish, but, at least, there IS an ending! Cf. PA #72: 66; #73: 44; #74: 51; #75: 48.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #1480, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs:	3.5	Animation:	3.5	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	3.5	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★☆

CASSHAN ROBOT HUNTER

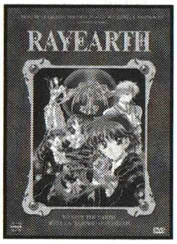


One of Tatsunoko's (*Macross*) successes in the good old days, *Casshan* was one of the titles they revived in the early 90's. As such, the overall quality is rather nice (the character designs are by Yasuomi Umetsu, who did *Megazone 23, Part II*). The story lacks a bit of originality, but is still entertaining. Interesting, but, in the genre, the new *Gatchaman* was better.

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DRH-001, Dub. DVD, 105 min., $24.98, 15+.

Designs:	3.5	Animation:	3.5	Soundtrack:	2.5
Story:	3	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★

RAYEARTH OVAs



This DVD contains all three episodes of this really nice looking OVA, which is a VERY different recounting of CLAMP's famous *Magic Knight Rayearth* TV series. The story is completely changed (a mix of the two TV series, plus other elements), but the characters remain the same as they were in the original series. Nicely done, but not as good as the first *Rayearth* ...

Manga, Biling. DVD, 180 min., $24.95, PG (Violence, Brief Nudity).

Designs:	4	Animation:	3.5	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	3	Translation:	3	Average:	★★★☆

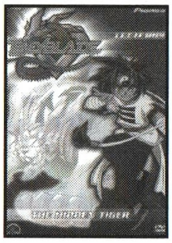
SAMURAI SHOWDOWN: THE MOTION PCITURE

Another one of those video game-derived animation. However, I found this one particularly bad. The designs are bad, the animation VERY standard (is this really supposed to be a MOVIE?!) and the story bored me to tears. Even the voice acting is pitiful! The worst is, the DVD only contains the dubbed version, so you don't have a choice! NOT recommended at all!

ADV, Cat. #DSS-001, Dubbed DVD, 80 min., $19.98, 12+.

Designs:	2	Animation:	2.5	Soundtrack:	2
Story:	2	Translation:	2	Average:	★★

BEYBLADE, VOL. 3



Oh well. Another animation made only to sell toys to already gorged children. As such, the animation is so-so, the character designs rather basic and the story profoundly ridiculous. As if spinning a top could be a world renowned sport (they build stadiums for this?!) requiring skills beyond imagination! This one is for kids only (and even then...). Cf. PA #75: 48.

Pioneer, Cat. #11962, Dubbed DVD, 125 min., $19.98, 7+.

Designs:	2.5	Animation:	3	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	2.5	Translation:	3	Average:	★★★

FANCY LALA, VOL. 6

This DVD contains the last four episodes of this cute "Magical Girl" TV series. Although not a masterpiece by any means, it was rather entertaining and the ending was nicely brought on. One of this show's greatest strength was its character designs, by Akemi Takada (*Orange Road, Patlabor*). Cute, fun and little girls should love it! Cf. PA #72: 66; #73: 44; #74: 51; #75: 49; #76: 55.

Bandai, Cat. #1335, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 7+.

Designs:	4	Animation:	3.5	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	3	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★☆

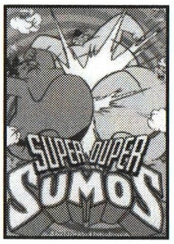
SABER MARIONETTE J TO X, VOL. 6

This DVD contains the last four episodes of this series, which nicely completes the Saber Marionette saga. The bad guys get their butts kicked and Lime, Cherry and Bloodberry become cute little human children and Otaru has to be their dad! All ends well and Japoness and Terra II are saved. What more can you ask for? Cf. PA #65; #72: 68; #73: 46; #74: 54; #75: 51.

Bandai, Cat. #0495, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs:	3.5	Animation:	3.5	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	3.5	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★☆

SUPER DUPER SUMOS, VOL. 2-3



As we said in our first review of this title: "Is this is what the North American animators think they can use to compete against anime big guns such as Gundam?" Our impression has not changed at all. This is the kind of stuff that makes North American people think animation is for kids...Cf. PA #75: 50.

A.D.V. Kids, Cat. #DSD-002/3, Dubbed DVD, 115 min./95 min., $19.98, G.

Designs:	2	Animation:	2	Soundtrack:	2.5
Story:	2.5	Translation:	—	Average:	★★☆

CARD CAPTOR SAKURA, VOL. 15

This DVD contains episodes #56 to 59 in their uncut format. As such, this is the version real CLAMP fans should go after, as it keeps the very special flavor CLAMP's works have (the version shown on TV here was edited). It is only subtitled, but it should not matter to hardcore fans. Cf. PA #65: 49; #66: 55; #69: 60; #70: 57; #71: 46; #73: 47; #74: 54; #75: 51; #76: 58.

Pioneer, Cat. #11757, Subtitled DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs:	4	Animation:	3.5	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	3.5	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★☆

HELLSING BOX SET

This Box Set contains the entire series. Although stunning by the quality of its designs, as well as the creation of a very special atmosphere, *Hellsing* was unable to bring us complete satisfaction, if only because of its botched ending. So many things could have been done with this story! However, we cannot forget that it looks REAL cool! Cf. PA #72: 65; #74: 52; #75: 49.

Pioneer, Cat. #11987, Bilingual DVD, 325 min., $124.98, 16+.

Designs:	4	Animation:	4	Soundtrack:	3.5
Story:	3	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★☆

SAILOR MOON SUPER S , VOL. 6

The *Sailor Moon* saga continues, as Chibi-Usagi becomes an adult for a short time (which makes Usagi rather jealous, as Chibi is just as cute as she is). This DVD contains episodes #31 to 36 of the series in their uncut version. If you are a *Sailor Moon* fan, this is the version you should get! Cf. PA #70: 58; #71: 47; #74: 54.

Pioneer, Cat. #11717, Bilingual DVD, 145 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs:	3	Animation:	3	Soundtrack:	3
Story:	3	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★

X (TV), VOL. 5

In these three episodes (#13 to 15), Kamui has to face the horrible truth: his beloved Kotori is dead and Fuma is the Dragón Of Earth's Kamui! Now all hell is going to break loose and Saiki will be the first to "get his wish". But will Kamui be able to face the one he loves like a brother? Captivating! Cf. PA #74: 50, 69-70; #75: 50; #76: 57.

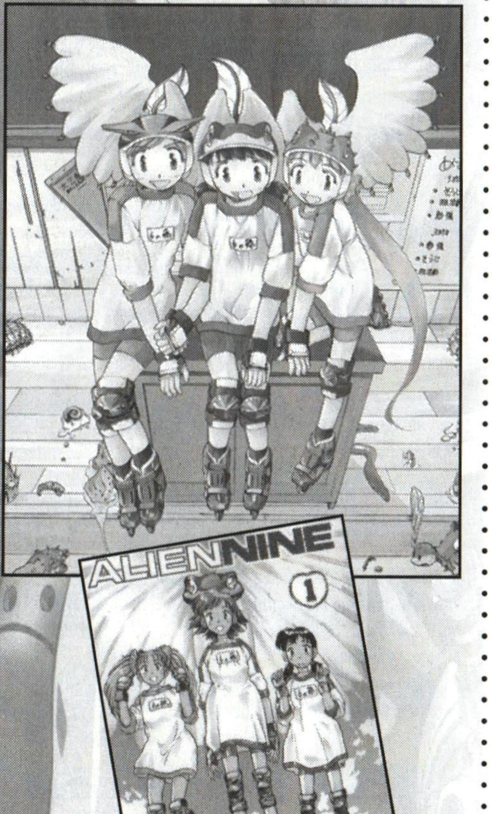
Pioneer, Cat. #11828, Bilingual DVD, 75 min., $29.98, 16+.

Designs:	4.5	Animation:	4	Soundtrack:	4
Story:	4.5	Translation:	3.5	Average:	★★★★

Unless stated otherwise, all reviews are by Martin Ouellette.

ALIEN 9: OVERVIEW

COLLECTOR'S SERIES
From the creators of Excel Saga
ALIEN NINE
DVD
ENGLISH & JAPANESE WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES



⚠ SPOILERS AHEAD ⚠

If you're into bizarre anime, you'll probably like the strange world of *Alien 9*, based on Hitoshi Tomizawa's popular manga. This four-episode OVA series, originally released between June 2001 and February 2002, brings you in a world you have never seen before! The story takes place in the very near future (2016). The world is full of bizarre aliens and people have to live their everyday life with the fact that aliens exist and are among them. Yuri Otani, the main character, is a 6th grader who was, unfortunately for her, chosen by her classmates to be part of the "Alien Countermeasure Squad", along with two other girls, Kumi and Kasumi. The aliens seem to co-exist with humans and the squad's job is to capture the unruly ones so that events harmful to both humans and aliens do not take place. People seem to go on with their lives and, despite the presence of the not-always-cute aliens, they are not living in a war zone — the main characters are going to their elementary school normally. Outwardly, *Alien 9* just looks like another science-fiction story with little kids trying to catch aliens. But it is not that simple! This story uses a lot of symbolism to show the character growing into adulthood and dealing with their fear. Those three girls wear strange living caps, which are sentient aliens, to learn how to co-exist with aliens. Those, in return for food (they lick the girls' skin to eat their sweat and dead skin!), give them all the necessary powers to deal with their job. It is like a metaphor about little girls entering adolescence, the second stage of their lives. Yuri is constantly afraid, to the point that she is a crybaby! So, how can she overcome her paralyzing fear?

This is not just a story of "the bunch of girls who save the day by beating the aliens" at all! The anime version is quite faithful to the original manga and respects its weird flavor, as well as all the phobias and "friendship & teamwork conquer all" themes. Growing up is never easy. In the anime, Yuri's anxiety disorder and suffering seem more pronounced. How can you categorize someone like Yuri? Decidophobia (fear of making decisions by herself) perhaps? In a way, she is a fascinating character and I haven't seen any other like her in any manga or anime. The original manga's creator, Hitoshi Tomizawa, was quite successful in bringing this character to life. Anxiety disorders are frequently known as "phobias" — the intense fear of a particular object, situation or animal that seem out of proportions to the danger involved. Yuri was chosen against her will to become part of the "Alien Countermeasure Squad" and she has no intention of dealing with this enormous task. She would rather disappear than face aliens! All normal children have fears. Everyone is frightened by what we only partly comprehends, but Yuri is forced to do this task she dislikes and which creates a great anxiety (becoming almost a phobia). She, then, begins to live in a constant state of anticipatory fear. Yuri's feelings go beyond normal anxiety. She constantly keeps screaming "I'm scared!!!" and can only cry. Generally speaking, phobias are relatively common in childhood (I was scared of snakes!), but, as we grow older, we tend to leave those irrational fears behind. But when we look at Yuri, we begin to wonder if she is ever going to be alright.

In the *Alien 9* OVAs, as each episode progresses, there are scenes to symbolize those three girls' psychological state and some scenes of cruel violence (three boys are so bored with their lives that they decide to attack Yuri-chan for fun! This act has a disastrous effect!). Those who watch this show to get an answer about why things are happening in such peculiar manners might be disappointed a bit because there are NO answers for the audience (some might react like "What is this anyway?"). However, the psychological state of each character is skillfully shown — those three girls are completely defenseless when a "Yellowknife" alien shows up. Everyone has his/her own weaknesses and traumas and looking at those three characters might make you feel quite uneasy when they are psychologically attacked by the "Yellowknife" alien. Poor Yuri keeps crying until the end and cannot overcome her phobia! Can she really grow up? When you finish watching those four episodes, you feel like nothing is solved (I hope more episodes will later be made to further explain the story, especially about those female teachers!). A very high quality anime. The OVA's creators seem to really love the manga! [MM]

Despite the fact that *Alien 9* looks like a kid's animation, it leaves a strange after-taste of dark feelings that can be somewhat disturbing. That's probably why many fans tried to dig into the story in search of deeper symbolism. Recently, at Anime North, Kathryn Williams was explaining to me that Yuri could be considered as a survivor of sex abuses (the scene where three kids attack her could be a rape and the Borg licking her back could be abuse — more details on www.KatAndNekoManga.ca). Also, some say that Yuri and Kumi relationship is more than it seems or that Kumi's death, hinted in the ending credits, appears to be a suicide (although the manga will later say she was killed by aliens). While all this might seems far-fetched to some, it is a legetimate analysis. With its cute (but a little rough at times) art and its deceivingly complex story (maybe difficult to follow, but quite intriguing), *Alien 9* is quite an unusual animation that is worth checking. And it definitely deserves its 13+ rating! [CJP]

Alien 9, four 30-min. OVAs, based on the manga by Hitoshi Tomizawa serialized in Akita Shoten's *Young Champion* comics; directed by Jiro Fujimoto (*Lassie, Tico Of The 7 Seas*); script by Sadayuki Murai (*Alexander, Boogiepop Phantom, Cowboy Bebop, Millenium Actress, Perfect Blue*); Character Design by Yasuhiro Irie; Creature Design by Kazunori Iwakura (*Angel Of Darkness, Art Of Fighting, Mad Bull 34, Samurai Showdown*); Music by Kuniaki Haijima (*Gasaraki, Neo Ranga, Spriggan*); Created by Genco, J.C. Staff (*Excel Saga*); Cast: Juri Ihata (Yuri), Kaori Shimizu (Kumi), Noriko Shitaya (Kasumi), Aya Hisakawa (Megumi). The manga is released in North America by CPM Manga and the anime is released by US Manga Corps (USMD 2241, 100 min., $29.99 US, 13+, released on 7/8/2003).

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

Alien 9 ©2001, 2003 Hitoshi Tomizawa • Akita Shoten / *Alien 9* Committee. Video provided by Central Park Media.

ALIEN 9: CHARACTER PROFILES

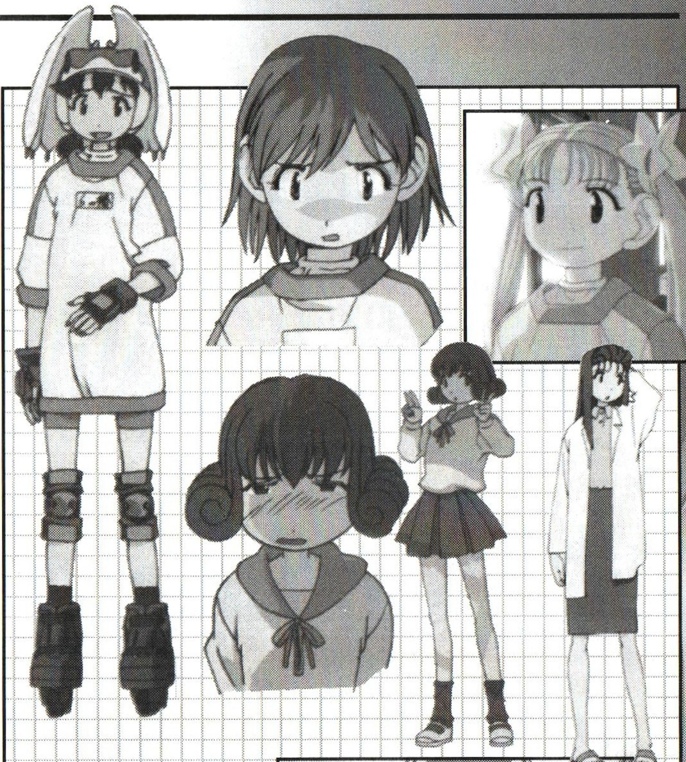
Yuri Otani: The story's main character, Yuri is a 6th grader at the 9th elementary school. Her classmates chose her to be part of the "Alien Countermeasure Squad" and she is forced to wear a symbiotic alien, named Borg, on her head in order to do her task, which consists in capturing icky aliens. However, she has no talent for the job and has a phobia about aliens, which makes her cry in fear all the time. Will she be able to carry out her duties?

Kumi Kawamura: The leader of the 9th elementary school's Alien Countermeasure Squad. She is an excellent student. Her father passed away when she was four (he died of cancer) and her mother is a writer. Therefore, Kumi takes care of all the household chores and also helps her mom as assistant (she does editing, research, etc.). She is very independent and hates to depend on others. Thing is, she does not like to be depended on either, so she somewhat feels annoyed by Yuri's crybaby attitude. But, since she is Yuri's friend, she does try to help her improve her situation.

Kasumi Tomine: Kasumi WANTED to be part of the Alien Countermeasure Squad! She does almost everything perfectly and tries her hardest to be the best in whatever she does. Her parents are very rich and can provide everything she needs and wants, but make it a point that she finishes what she starts. Kasumi is beautiful, has a very positive attitude toward life and is also a genius! However, she has one weakness: her beloved older brother has gone abroad for his studies and she feels extremely lonely in his absence. This emotional problem could become fatal...

Miyu Tamaki: Miyu is Yuri's classmate and really worries about her friend's well-being. Miyu's character is there for Yuri's emotional support.

Megumi Hisakawa: An Alien Countermeasure advisor for the 9th elementary school, Megumi gives them advice and technical support, but does not help them in their job. She knows a lot about aliens and their treatment. A rather mysterious young lady...



ALIEN 9: SHORT SYNOPSES

1. The 9th Elementary School: Alien Countermeasure Member

12 year-old Yuri Otani is in 6th grade and has been chosen to be a part of the "Alien Countermeasure Squad" by her classmates. She absolutely hates her duties and is terrified by the task, screaming "I hate aliens!!! I hate looking at them!!! I don't even want to touch the damn things!!!" Despite her true feelings and in order to fight the aliens to protect her elementary school, she is forced to wear a "Symbiotic Alien", called Borg. Yuri also meets the two other members of her squad, Kumi and Kasumi.

2. Boredom, The Spaceship, Rapid Overgrowth

A month has passed since Yuri became a part of the Alien Countermeasure Squad. She is trying her best because she has no choice and was told that she is not allowed to quit. But three boys, who are bored to death, decided to wear aliens on their heads and come to attack Yuri just to have some fun. Yuri's terror reached a paroxysm and her Borg went crazy, killing all aliens around, including Kumi and Kasumi's.

3. Summer Vacation, Borg, The End Of Life

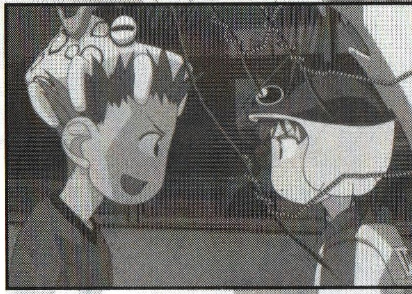
Summer vacation has arrived. Yuri is greatly depressed. Her friends decide to take Yuri for a trip to Kasumi's summer house so that she can enjoy the ocean and the beach and relax a bit. Yuri seems to enjoy all those activities, such as swimming, the summer festival, bug catching, etc. But all good times come to an end...

4. The End Of The Beginning

An alien, named "Yellowknife", has arrived at the 9th elementary school and Kasumi has been taken hostage by the alien, who has hidden her inside its body. Yuri and Kumi have no choice, but to go an try to save their friend. However, Yellowknife uses a psychological attack against the girls. The attack also has an effect on Kasumi, who is terrified by the thought of "being alone". Can Yuri and Kumi manage to save Kasumi?

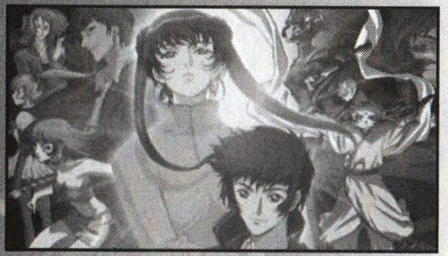
Manga Review

A kind of elementary school sci-fi adventure! Created by Hitoshi Tomizawa, the character designs are cute (well, all 12-year-old girls should be, right?), but some people have complained about Tomizawa's stylized human drawings, such as them having no nose (just a itty-bitty dot!) and big ears like monkeys! But the manga artist has clean inking and a layout that is easy to look at. The storytelling, especially the characters' personal development, is at the core of this manga, showing three very different girls, Yuri (the crybaby), Kumi (the responsible honor student) and Kasumi (the genial young lady, but with a very strong brother complex). This is a story about three little girls' forced passage, in a very cruel and painful manner, to adolescence. A psychological drama with many symbolisms.

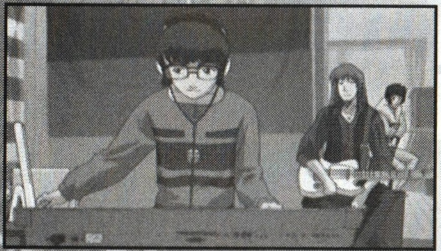


AQUARIAN AGE: OVERVIEW

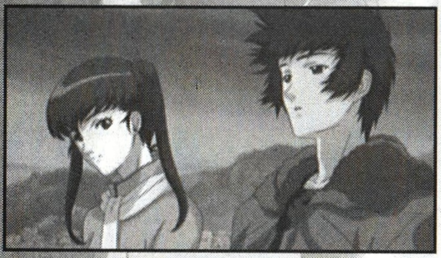
⚠ SPOILERS AHEAD ⚠



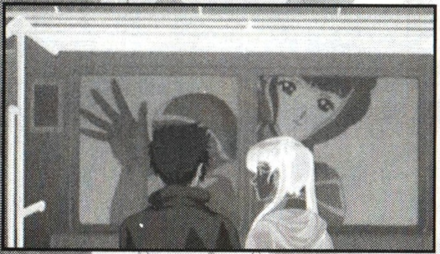
Aquarian Age is a popular card game in Japan. It's so popular that there are tournaments scattered throughout the country. Due to its popularity, the game company Broccoli and Victor Entertainment teamed up to create an animated version to help spread the gospel of *Aquarian Age* and its storyline. So for those of you who don't know, this game is multi-staged, using five groups fighting against each other. They are Arayashi, which is the group of shrine maidens and psychics; Wizdom, a group of western-style magic users; Darklore, a proto-earth controlling and dominant half-beast tribe; E.G.O., a group of ultra-psychics; and Eraser, a group of aliens from other planets. The cards were created and illustrated by Japan's top anime artists and cartoonists; therefore, hardcore fans really wanted to see an animated version of *Aquarian Age*, so here it is.



The heroine of the anime version is Yoriko Sannou, two years older than her counterpart hero, Kyota Kamikurata. They grew up together as childhood sweethearts. Yoriko is the only daughter of the Shinto Shrine and the reincarnation of an ancient goddess. Her fate is to become head of the Arayashiki tribe. But she'd rather be around Kyota for as long as she can and time is running out. Rumiko Sakamoto, the cousin of Yoriko has already awakened as a psychic for the Arayashiki and she is pushing Yoriko to take her position as Ben-Sai-Ten, the head of the tribe. Meanwhile Kyota has enormous power as Mind Breaker when he sings. Then he, whether he likes it or not, gets involved within the psychic wars. Every faction wants to use him to rule the world!

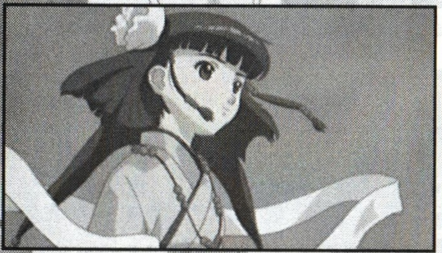


My first reaction was "Oh God, not another anime with psychic warfare!" But as I watched the entire span of 13 episodes, and especially the finale, I felt good about the storytelling — and relieved to discover it's not a judgmental good vs. evil story. This version uses the world of the card game as its backdrop, but the story focuses more on the light and shadow worlds of youth; the two sides that struggle to exist in the human mind while we are growing up. The "awakening" is when someone discovers their latent talent and the impact it has on their lives. I think really that Director Yoshimitsu Ohashi wanted to emphasize that all humans have a balance of good and evil in their minds, and it's our choice which way we will lean. We all have that potential. *Aquarian Age* is a story of human awakening and to be good or evil is the real question here; our heroine Yoriko makes a fateful decision.

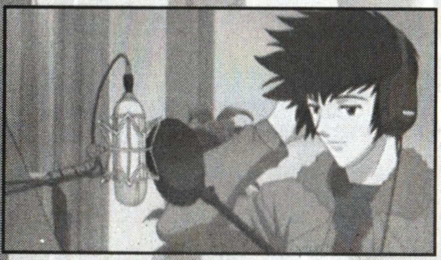


There is a cute supporting character, Kiriko Heguri, who's crazy about Kyota as she is his enthusiastic fan. She was entirely an ordinary schoolgirl, but as she goes through her awakening, she uses her power for the better and becomes an idol in the entertainment industry. On the other hand, Yoriko uses her power to further her career as an actress in an evil, violent manner. The point is how do we manage to use our mind for better, or for worse? It's all up to us. Yoriko keeps her evil side because she is unable to kill it. She admits she is jealous of Kyota's music and that is what drives her down the path of evil as "Sarasvaty". Kyota manages to save her but, in the end, all characters have their own lives to lead.

I was pleasantly surprised to see such mature storytelling and ending. It's rare to see unlimited warmth and humanity in an anime show. Outwardly, it's a psychic war anime show, but the Kyota's love story will touch your heart.



A high quality show by Studio Madhouse with superb music by Yuki Kajiwara (*Shin Kimagure Orange Road, Noir, .Hack//Sign*) that will charm viewers. Only three factions appear in the anime (Arayashiki, Darklore, and Wizdom) and all this fighting might confuse those who are not familiar with the card game. After all, so many people are fighting for different objectives; it may be hard to keep track of it all. But as a love story, this show is surely charming.



Aquarian Age: Sign For Evolution aired on TV Tokyo every Thursdays at 1:15 am from January 10 to March 28th, 2002 for a total of 13 episodes. It was directed by Yoshimitsu Ohashi (who worked on *Trigun* as animator and on *Green Legend Ran* as designer), with designs by Hisashi Abe (who directed *Devil Hunter Yohko*, designed for *Petshop Of Horrors, Offside, Twilight Of The Dark Master* and was animator on *Blue Sonnet* and *Chivas 123*). The cast includes Noboyuki Tanaka, Mayuko Aoki and Chinami Nishimura. It is availabl in Japan on seven R2 DVDs (VIBF-114~120, ± 50 min. ea., ¥5800 ea.) and was licensed for a North American release by ADV Films.

Designs:	Animation:	Soundtrack:	Story:	Translation:	Average:
4	3.5	4.5	3	—	4

Aquarian Age: Sign For Evolution ©2002 Broccoli • Victor Entertainment. Video provided by Michael Liu.

AQUARIAN AGE: CHARACTER PROFILES

Kyota Kamikurata: This high school student wants to be a professional singer, but in fact he's a Mind Breaker who can awaken people mentally and make people crazy with his singing. Rumiko, Yoriko's cousin, asks him to rescue Yoriko from the dark side. Can Kyota's song reach her heart? He lives with his parents who own a convenience store. They don't take his singing aspirations seriously. With his friends Jun and Shin, he forms the group "TL Signal."

Yoriko Sanno: Kyota's girlfriend is the re-incarnation of Ben-Sai-Ten, the ancient goddess. She is fated to become the head of the Shinto Shrine Arayashiki. In order to do so, she must beat Sarasvaty, but instead she chooses the way of evil. Can Kyota save her?

Rumiko Sakamoto: The little girl cousin of Yoriko wants her to become head of Arayashiki, the secret organization from ancient times. Rumiko also wants Kyota to rescue Yoriko from Sarasvaty; otherwise her life will be ruined.

Asumi Hogetsu: She's Kyota's classmate, but in reality she is a powerful psychic whose power is ice. Asumi enters the entertainment industry in order to fight against Yoriko's evil actions.

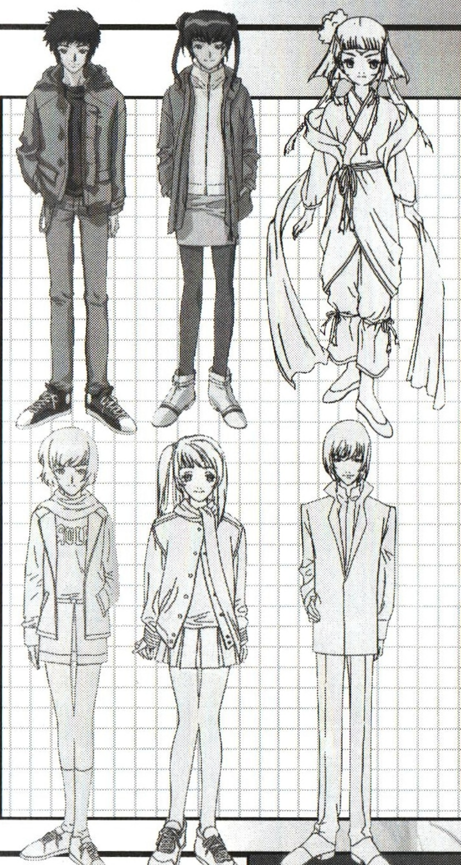
Kiriko Heguri: She's an enthusiastic fan of Kyota. She starts working at Abuto's office and the cameraman thinks she can become an idol singer/actress. Her power allows her to improve her skill as a pop idol.

Ryusei: A top singer who belongs to Ms. Misato's production office, Ryusei is a narcissist who says mean things to Kyota. Kyota swears that he will beat him.

Misato Yukimura: She's the entertaining industry's production manager who is eager to scout young, fresh, new talent. She discovered Kyota.

Keiji Abuto: He is the manager of Kanae. He wants to rule the world using Sarasvaty, the dark side of the human mind. He used the words to summon Yoriko, which awakens her desires. He learns that Sarasvaty is much more powerful than he thought.

Kanae Morino: She's like an animal and Keiji controls her with a collar. She is the number one idol singer, but when Keiji bestowed more attention to Yoriko, her jealousy drives her to murder. Her emotions are quite complex.



AQUARIAN AGE: SHORT SYNOPSES

1. The Overture of the Deep Blue

High school student Kyota Kamikurata wants to be a professional singer and he practices his music with two other musicians, preparing for a live concert on New Year's Day. He is happy because his girlfriend Yoriko is coming to watch. But some secret organizations are moving to get him – and the fight begins.

2. A Hunch of the Fire-Green

After the concert, a manager of the entertainment production Cosmo Pop, Misato Yukimura, arrives to scout Kyota and his band. They're more than pleased and Kyota feels honoured because pop singer Ryusei belongs to the same company.

3. The Depression of the Dirty Red

Yoriko's true form is the reincarnation of an ancient goddess, and her little cousin Rumiko warns her that there is no time to wait. Yoriko wants to just live as an ordinary girl…

4. The Offering of the Deep Black

Misato brings Kyota and his band to see Ryusei's concert. There he sees the number one singer Kanae with her manager Keiji, but something is very wrong. They behave strangely in front of Misato.

5. The Necessity of the Sharp White

Turns out Kyota is a Mind Breaker who can rule the world with the tremendous power within his body. The secret organizations want him, to bring him to their side.

6. The Salvation of the Illusion Green

Finally Yoriko is awakened as Ben-Sai-Ten, the goddess of the Arayashiki Shrine. But she hesitates to accept her fate. Meanwhile Keiji tells her there is another way for her to live – that is, to be Sarasvaty, free with enormous power. Keiji tempts her to join his productions and Yoriko thinks that being a Sarasvaty in the entertainment industry will help her protect Kyota from evil forces.

7. The Division of the Deep Red

Now, Yoriko has awakened as an evil Sarasvaty. With her power she gets a role in a major movie called *Season of Holly*.

8. The Awakening of the Thin Purple

Kyota is now stunned to see Yoriko as a professional actress. He wants to find out what's going on and talk to her. But Yoriko has an evil heart and does not need Kyota around anymore. Her personality has changed for the worse. She is arrogant and everyone fears her.

9 The Remaining Shadow of the Silver Line

Yoriko's little cousin Rumiko wants to rescue her, but she's powerless to do so. She goes to see Kyota and begs him for help. He's confused and has no idea what is happening, but one thing is for sure: if he doesn't rescue Yoriko, her personality will be absorbed by true evil. What can he do?

10. The Airshell of the Illusion White

Kyota decides to write a song and tries to get Yoriko back. But she treats him like dirt, telling him his song is ludicrous. He's shocked by her callous words, but he clings to childhood memories of what was between them. Kyota is suffering now!

アクエリアンエイジ
Sign for Evolution
ブロッコリー/ビクターエンタテインメント

11. The Movement of the Bright Yellow

Kyota and his band practice hard for their upcoming debut and subsequent tour. They've been slaving in the studio. Kyota is still clueless as to why Yoriko won't listen to his music. His band knows why. They're seriously annoyed because his songs and singing are the absolute worst right now.

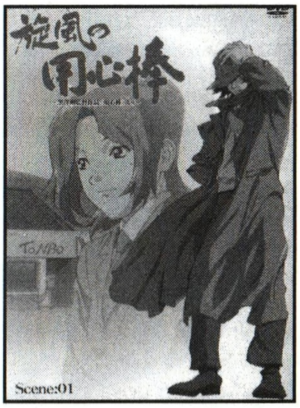
12. The Embrace of the Gold

Kiriko, an enthusiastic fan of Kyota, makes him realize what he's lacking inside. To rescue Yoriko, he decides to fight against Sarasvaty, along with Kiriko. But Sarasvaty's power is oppressive and can't be beat. Then Rumiko succeeds in uniting Arayashiki, combing the power of four gods.

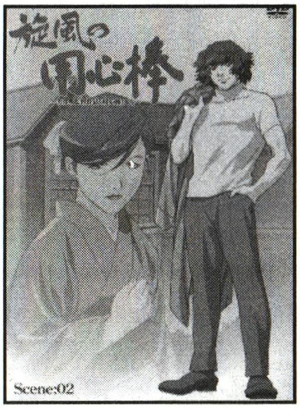
13. The Pure Coolness of the Rainbow Light

The war is over. But Yoriko won't wake up as Kyota calls for her desperately. Can Yoriko come back to her old self? Thankfully, things end for the better for everyone and Kyota is able to tour the world. Three years later, everyone has grown with a better future.

KAZE NO YOJIMBO [THE BODYGUARD OF THE WIND]: OVERVIEW



Younger anime fans in North America might not know the acclaimed Japanese director Akira Kurosawa. He is legendary and created countless Japanese classic films like *The Seven Samurai* (remade as *The Magnificent Seven* in America), *Ran* and *Rashomon*. Even Steven Spielberg and George Lucas have financed his movies (*Kagemusha*) in the past (Lucas was also inspired by Kurosawa's *Hidden Fortress* when writing *Star Wars*). Kurosawa also directed a film called *Yojimbo* [*The Bodyguard*], released in April 1961 from Toho Films (and later adapted in English by Sergio Leone as *A Fistful Of Dollars*). The legendary film starred Toshiro Mifune, a charismatic actor who appeared in most of his early films. The film's story takes place in the Edo era of the Shogunate in Japan, so it may not appeal to the younger viewers of today, therefore this anime version directed by Hayao Date (*Super Angels* and *Saiyuki The Movie*) is offering viewers a story that takes place in modern Japan (but yes of course, the basic storyline is the same). It is ideal to takes viewers to familiarize yourself with Kurosawa's world of storytelling and human relationship.



Since most anime shows we see are flashy science fiction or about a young girl's love experience, this show is very different and quite refreshing — so I strongly recommend it! With superb direction by Date and the unusual cinematographic images, viewers will be charmed by the classic Japanese film atmosphere! The anime isn't overly flashy with action, violence or even sex, but it's refreshing to get involved with the solid detective story – and try to solve the mystery. It would be a good live-action film, so why do it as anime? In Japan, since the 1970's there has been a manga genre named "Geki-ga" (which literally means "drama-manga") and many adults in Japan grew up with this format of storytelling — so why not an anime in the same style? Studio Pierrot and Nippon Television have created this rather unusual project for TV aimed at adult viewers who will enjoy a good, solid story based on Akira Kurosawa's classic movie! I hope that more of this type of show will be made and introduce to viewers overseas — demonstrating that Japanimation isn't the quick, easy stereotype of sex and violence. For younger viewers, it's a great opportunity to discover Japanese classic films and stories. I hope that they create another show like this, perhaps based on the classics of director Kenji Mizoguchi or Yasujiro Ozu.

Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* is in fact a bit more comical than this show. The anime version is more serious, but with interesting characters. It also takes place in modern, Northern Japan and they talk quite a bit — not much music or dramatic background sound. Compared to Hollywood films that constantly bombard the senses with flashy, dramatic music and loud sound effects every minutes and rapid film editing, this style of Japanese storytelling is calm, but very effective. The scenes talk for themselves. Certainly the "geki-ga" style will be new for young viewers in North America. Also, the music (opening and ending theme songs) by Japanese singing group Escargo, with their simple vocal and guitar stay in your heart after listening! (A bit like folksongs).

Since this is a detective story, I'm not writing about the story here so there will still be a surprise for the viewers. I hope it will eventually be released in North America as well. Highly recommended for those who are looking for a very good story.

Kaze no Yojimbo was directed by Hayao Date, with character design by Takeshi Itoh (*Psybuster*), planning by Nagayuki Torumi & Katsuyuki Sumizawa, art direction by Mio Ittishiki, and the voice talents of Hiroaki Hirota (Joji), Shinpachi Tsuji and Sanae Kobayashi. It aired on NTV every Tuesday at 0:45 am from October 2nd 2001 to March 25th 2002, for a total of 25 episodes. It is available in Japan on five R2 DVDs (KIBA-727~30, 125 min. ea, ¥5800 ea).

Designs:	**4**	Animation:	**4.5**	Soundtrack:	**3.5**	Story:	**5**	Translation:	**—**	Average:	**4**

Kaze no Yojimbo © Kurosawa Production / Sammy • Dentsu • Studio Pierrot • NTV. DVD provided by www.cdjapan.co.jp. For more info: www.starchild.co.jp/special/kaze/main.htm or www.ntv.co.jp/yojinbo/

KAZE NO YOJIMBO: CHARACTER PROFILES

Joji (George) Kodama: A man who tries to seek the truth about the mysterious incident which took place 15 years prior to this story. He arrives at Kimujuku station in the countryside. He wears a gray hat and a long coat all the time. He looks for the man Genzo Araki who holds the key to the incident.

Miyuki Tanokura: A daughter of the politician Shusaku Tanokura. When she was attacked by the punk boys, Joji saved her. She's in love with him.

Tonbo's owner: The owner of the restaurant Tonbo in front of the Kimujuku Train Station. He has lived in the town of Kimujuku for a longtime and knows a lot about the people and its happenings.

Shusaku Tanokura: The owner of "Tanokura Mining Company" and also a politician/ assembly man of the city government. A very powerful man of this town. He approaches the widow Sanae Araki although he's married and daughter Miyuki is very unhappy about the situation.

Constable Konishi: A policeman of Kimujuku. He doesn't quite understand why Joji came to the town to investigate Genzo Araki.

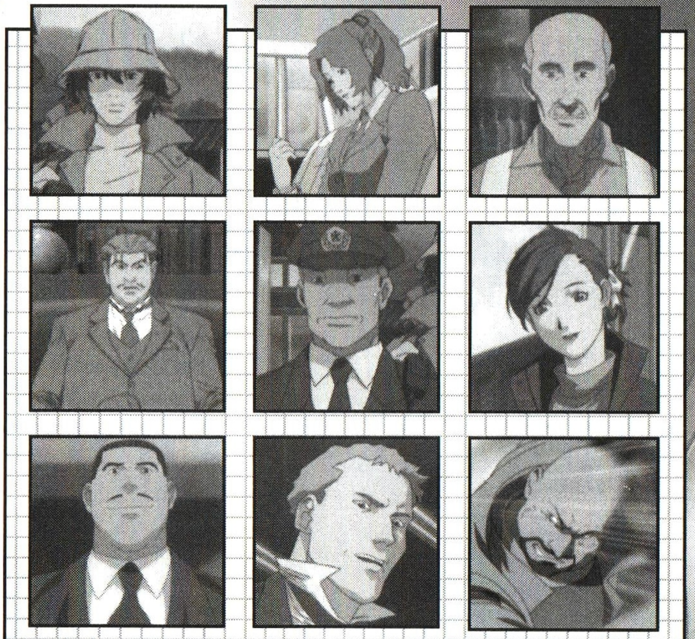
Sanae Araki: The owner of the hotel "Araki-Kan (House)" and a widow. A total opportunist who tries to use people. She has a dark past.

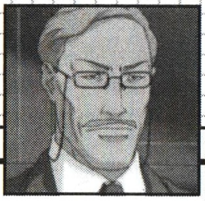
Fukajiro Shirogane: A younger brother of Samekichi and an operator of Shirogane Real Estate. A total simpleton.

Samekichi Shirogane: Nicknamed "Silver shark", and the president of Shirogane Real Estate. The enemy of Tanokura Mining Company.

Araiguma: A big man with a baldhead. One of the punk boys of Samekichi, but he gives total respect to Joji and follows him, calling him "Big Brother". His name means "Mr. Raccoon."

Mr. Kimbara: A member of the mysterious organization "I-System". He's deeply involved with the incident and he's the one who sent the Shirogane brothers to town.





KAZE NO YOJIMBO: SHORT SYNOPSES

1. With the Dust of Sand

The town of Kimujuku was very prosperous in the past due to its mining operation, but now it's a quiet, dying city — and worse yet, two factions (Tanokura Mining Company and Shirogane Real Estate) hate each other's guts and fight all the time. A man named Joji (George) Kodama comes to this town to look for a man called Genzo Araki.

2. The Red Snake Swamp

Joji saves the daughter of Tanokura. Miyuki is in love with him and wants him to stay at her house, but Joji decides to visit the Shirogane Brothers, to investigate who they are. After that, he decides to visit the place called The Red Snake Swamp and someone tries to kill him!

3. The Bodyguard

Miyuki tries to make Joji stay at her house as her bodyguard and her father is willing to pay. He also gives the address of Genzo Araki to Joji. But Joji needs to find out more. He decides to be a bodyguard for Sanae Araki instead!

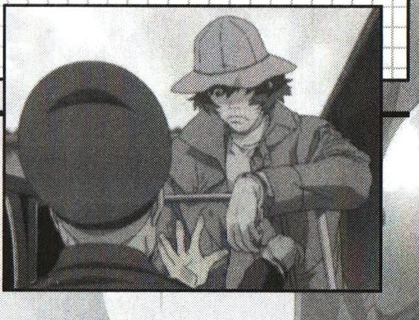
旋風の用心棒

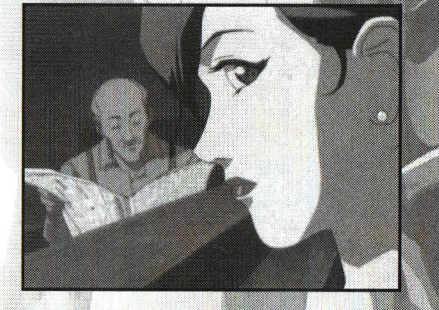
4. The Flower and the Poison

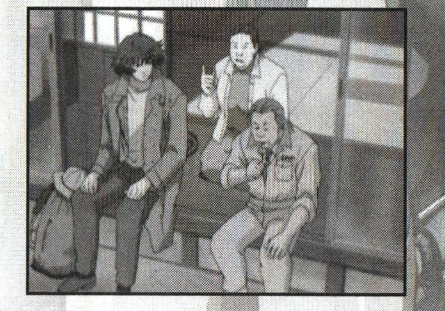
Now, Joji stays at the Araki-Kan (house) to protect Sanae Araki. But Sanae is a total opportunist who uses everyone for her own survival. But to Joji, Sanae's existence is convenient for him in order to stay in Kimijuku Town, because he doesn't want to side with anyone (Tanokura people or Shirogane people). Then, a murder mystery appears! A woman, who knows Sanae, is murdered!

5. The Chase

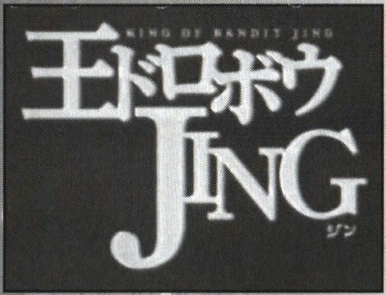
Now, Joji finds out that Mrs. Ryoko Kiuchi, the housewife who was murdered, lived near the address of Genzo Araki. Therefore, he visits Sendai City right away, disguising himself as an insurance company worker. About the same time, a mysterious man named Kimbara shows up in Kimujuku to tell him about the mysterious incident that took place.



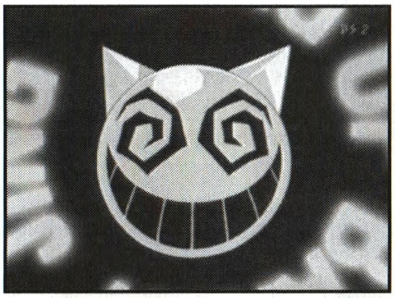




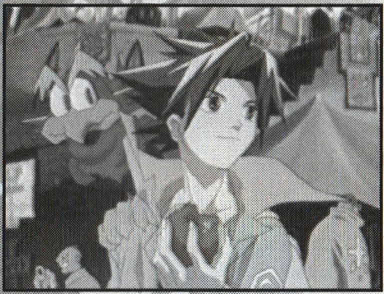
KING OF BANDIT JING [ODOROBO JING]: OVERVIEW



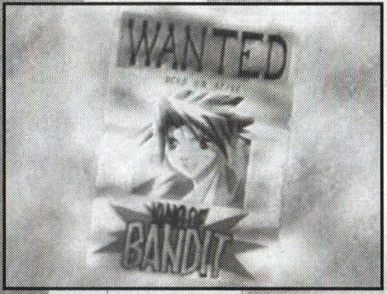
If you are looking for a cool anime to watch, we'd like to recommend you the short, but sweet, 13-episode TV show *King of Bandit Jing* (*Odorobo Jing*)! The show started on May 15th 2002, on NHK BS2 satellite TV and aired every Wednesday at 6:00 pm until August 7th. When you watch the entire show, you'll feel like you want to see more of the series (Personally, I hope they'll make a second season if they can!). This show certainly offers something eccentric to look at due to its background world (looks like somewhere in Italy) which kind of reminds me of the Italian comics drawings like Milo Manara.



The main stage of this story is a world of fantasy, but in a way, a quite artistic world, with a touch of wacky Japanese manga! The very first thing you see is the wacky smiling cat through the opening theme and the viewer will be intrigued by the world of Jing! Jing is the central character who can steal anything in the world and he holds the title of King of Bandits. He's the descendant of a legendary tribe that stole everything — even a star if it shines! Outwardly it looks like an action adventure, but to be precise, it's more like Jing's road-movie with his bird partner Kir. I think their names (as well as some of the other characters like Cider, Cognac, Dubonais, Fino, Sangria, Vermout, etc.) are alcoholic drinks — Gin and Kir (Kir is considered a "ladies drink"— a cocktail of white wine and cassis-blackcurrant liquer).

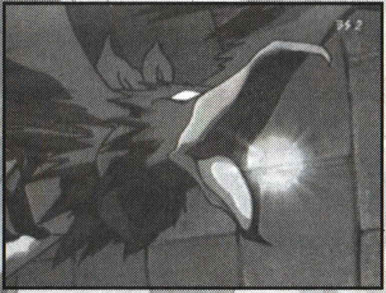


What Jing steals isn't really treasure in the traditional sense — in the show he seems to be after something abstract, getting involved with wacky characters in each episode — like artists. It seems that the act of stealing is more emphasized, rather than the treasure. Jing's partner bird Kir loves to talk sweet to the ladies and he looks like a sidekick, but together, Jing and Kir can shoot the "Kir Royal" bullet to smite their enemies. The opening and ending theme songs by Scooderia Electro are quite pleasant, with artistic drawings (and some good rock music!).



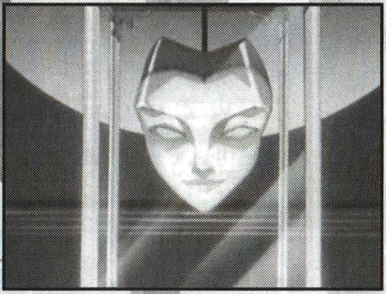
The director, Hiroshi Watanabe and the Studio Dean crew really came up with a high quality show. Usually thieves in anime shows are like Lupin the 3rd and his friends, but Jing is quite different. In each episode, he travels with Kir to steal an object and to help the troubled characters (going place to place like a fantastic journey in a fantasy land!). Jing doesn't really talk much, but he seems to care. With Kir, they always look happy and upbeat! The story also really doesn't explain much, but instead the viewer can get a feel for this fantasyland with its simple music and wacky scenes.

So, you may wonder why he's called "The King of Bandits" when he doesn't seek fortune, girls or status. In many way ways, it feels similar to *One Piece*. Clearly, Jing is not a bad person, but why is he a thief? He never hurts anyone for the sake of money. He really isn't desiring to be rich, famous and to have a life of luxury. What Jing really wants is the thrill of adventure, I suppose, and the quest for "something beautiful" rather than money. He doesn't seek reward either! And he steals your heart too! All the episodes are independent, each with female characters called "The Jing girls". Instead of one female lead, this show offers many Jing girls who are involved in the story and his adventures. All pretty gals indeed!



Based on the manga by Yuichi Kumakura (serialized in Kodansha's *Magazin Z*), this stylish anime will definitely charm you. The only complaint is that show is too short! Enter this fantasy adventure world with Jing and Kir and leave reality at the door. The last three episodes, "The Masquerade of Zaza", is the highlight. Highly recommended for anime fans who seek a taste of the fine arts!

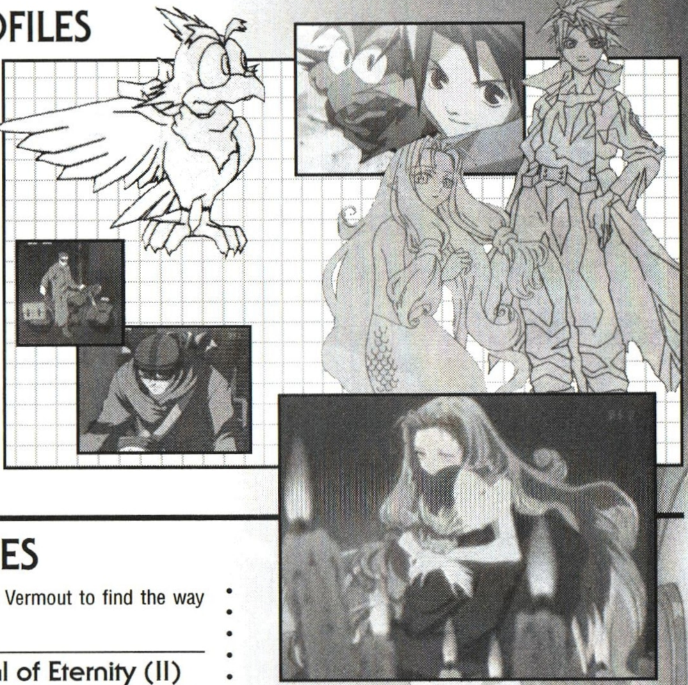
King Of Bandits Jing is directed by Hiroshi Watanabe (*Guyver: Out Of Control*, *Minky Momo*, *Orphen*, *Slayers* movies, *Star Ocean EX*, *You're Under Arrest!*), with a screenplay by Reiko Yoshida (*Neko no Ongaeshi*), character design by Mariko Oka, art direction by Mitsuyoshi Nakamura and the voice talents of Mitsuki Saiga, Ryusei Nakao, Shinichiro Miki, Sakura Nogawa, Yukari Tamura, Yui Horie, Hekiru Shiina, Maaya Sakamoto, Satsuki Yukino, Mayumi Iizuka. It is available in Japan on six R2 DVDs (SVWB-1541~46, 50 min. ea., ¥4800 ea [Vol. 6: 75 min., ¥5300]) or a DVD-Box set (SVZB-1501, 330 min., ¥18,000). It has been acquired by ADV Films for a North American release on July 22nd, 2003.



Designs:	Animation:	Soundtrack:	Story:	Translation:	Average:
4	3.5	4	3.5	—	4

King Of Bandit Jing ©2002 Yoichi Kumakura • Kodansha / SME Visual Works. Video provided by Michael Liu.

KING OF BANDIT JING: CHARACTER PROFILES



Jing

He holds the title as "the King of Bandits" who can steal anything. He wears a yellow jacket to be even more conspicuous. When he receives a notice, he'll go anywhere to steal. He doesn't talk very much, but he does have lots of so-called witty "one-liners". He looks cold, but indeed he's a sincere and warm guy.

Kir

Kir is Jing's partner bird who loves the ladies and wants to approach them, telling them how beautiful they are. Once he's wound up, it's hard to stop him! Kir has a totally different character compared to Jing and he really likes to talk a lot. But when Jing is in danger, Kir is always at his side to transform and create the "Kir-Royal" battle gun.

Side Character "Il Postino"

Means the postman in Italian. This Postino guy shows up to inform Jing about the stuff he needs to know. He rides a bike.

KING OF BANDIT JING: SHORT SYNOPSES

1. The Capital of Thieves

There is a capital city where all thieves come and live. In this place, there is a secret treasure called "Double Mermaid". The Mayor of this thieves' city, Mr. Cognac, has it and he attacks anyone who tries to steal it. Cognac is such a malicious guy. Now, Jing and Kir show up to get the "Double Mermaid". An old witch also appears…who is she anyway?

2. The Phantom Ship of Blue Hawaii

The legend says there is a phantom ship at the seaside city of Blue Hawaii. And anyone, who sails on the ship, will die and their spirit will be taken by an evil ghost. Meanwhile, the beautiful policewoman Rose wants to arrest Jing and wants him to help her make her father normal again after his spirit is taken!

3. Adnis, the Capital of Time (First chapter)

The city of Adnis is weird because people have to be extremely punctual. Jing and Kir want the grapes that grow inside the city. This city is controlled by Master Gear. Jing helps a girl and her companions.

4. Adnis, the Capital of Time (Second chapter)

Jing and Kir disturb Master Gear's public execution for fun. Master Gear becomes very angry and he sends a group of followers to crush Jing and his friends. After all that, Jing frees everyone and can taste the grapes that give "the taste of freedom"!

5. The Little Girl of the City of Colours

Pompie is the city of colour and it's the city of the fine arts. There, Jing helps a girl, Fino, whose father disappeared looking for the colours to paint. He is a genius painter. The evil art dealer is using Fino to bring her father back.

6. Liviva, the Capital of Eternity (I)

There is a legend that the capital of the Ocean, Liviva, and her people had discovered an elixir to become immortal. Jing meets a mysterious girl, Vermout to find the way there...

7. Liviva, the Capital of Eternity (II)

It turns out that the capital of Eternity, Liviva, is a lonely and deserted island, but there is a King who claims that he has lived for eternity and can't recall how long he has lived. He claims Jing is the next King of Liviva.

8. The Bomb-creature Polvora

Jing and Kir decide to steal "the Sunstone" in the city of Sungria. On the way to Sungria, he ends up bringing the bomb-creatures Polvora. The mysterious girl Eliza shows up and claims that the creatures belong to her. Then, she tells her own unfortunate past to Jing.

9. Coco-Oco, the Music Island

Coco Oco is supposed to be an island of music where some mysterious legendary creature lives. But Jing is lost and, worse yet, he drowns. A shy girl, Mimoza helps Jing.

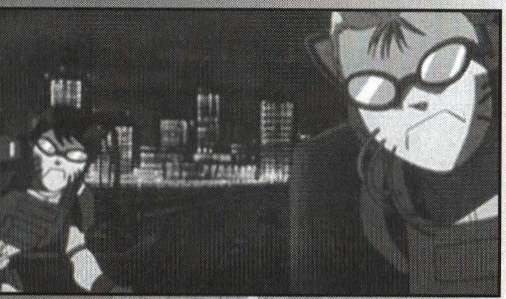
10. The Lullaby of Polvora

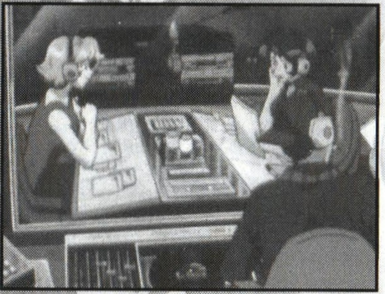
Jing and Kir lose their way. The bomb creatures Polvora are kept by Eliksil and she invites them to visit the ruins of the old factory. She wants to protect the Polvora and asks Jing for help.

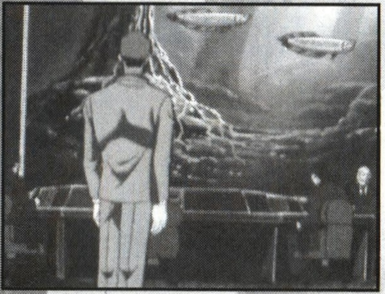
11-13. The Masquerade Of Zaza

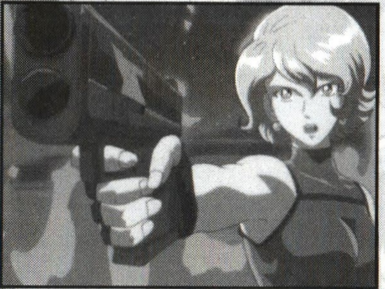
Jing and Kir arrive to steal the treasure called the "Vintage Smile", which is a mask. The legend says that there's a big masquerade, but instead the gathering becomes a fighting match. Countess Dubonais lost her feelings when her son Raymond died. She's still the ruler of the city of the ocean, Zaza. But the Countess is controlled by the Ice Brothers (Buffle, Crush and Cube) and the Countess' daughter Stea hates those fighting matches. Meanwhile, Jing keeps winning and the Ice Brothers hate it. Then, the Prince of the Rising-Sun arrives to fight Jing. The flamboyant match begins! Then, Jing is captured by the Ice Brothers. Why does Stea hate Jing so much? Can Jing steal the "Vintage Smile"?

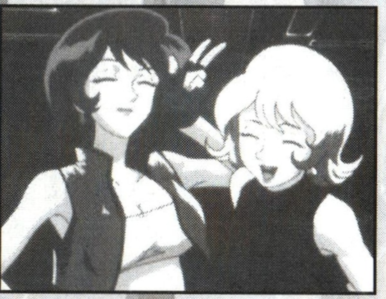
SIAMESE CATS: OVERVIEW







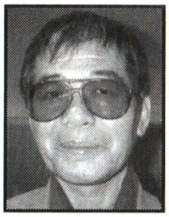




If you are a fan of Lupin III and the works of his creator, Monkey Punch, you must not miss the feature anime film *The Siamese Cats* (*Shamu Neko*). The two main characters, Jun and Naomi, were created by Monkey Punch long before *Lupin III* and were the inspiration for Fujiko Mine. This new anime is based on an old manga by Monkey Punch — who also supervised the production. The designs are faithful to the original (hence the 60s look), but the story is adapted to today's style. Released in theatres all over Japan on October 6th, 2001, the DVD was released soon after (BBBA-3075, 90 min., ¥6000, released on February 25th, 2002). Let's hope Jun and Naomi become new fixtures in the world of anime fans, perhaps to continue on as a new TV series.

SIAMESE
シャム猫

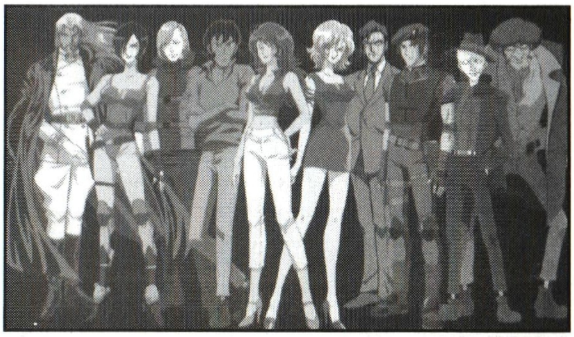
As some long time anime fans know, Monkey Punch has been a popular manga artist since the 60s. He made his debut using his unique nom de plume (his real name is Kazuhiko Kato) in 1966 with *Ginza Sempu-ji* (*The Ginza Wild Wind Kid*). A year later, in 1967, in the pages of *Weekly Manga Action*, *Lupin III* was unleashed to the world and the rest, they say, is history [for more information about Monkey Punch and *Lupin III* see PA#60: 42-47). He had this other idea about a duo of female fighters who combat against evil before *Lupin III*, but in those days, the idea of female crime fighters was a bit ahead of its time. Considering the social stage of the 60s, Japan had not gone through the Sexual Revolution and it was perhaps the peak of the country's post-World War II economical growth. Of course a male hero like Lupin was preferred and even Fujiko had a mere supporting role, there just for sex appeal. Now the years have passed and many female warriors have appeared (think *Dirty Pair*) and today Monkey Punch felt it was time to dust off his old characters: Jun and Naomi, the Siamese Cats.



In Monkey Punch's past works, like Fujiko in Lupin III, females utilized their sex appeal as their best weapon to get their way and survive in the world. In today's more egalitarian society females are freer than ever before and no longer can rely on the passive persuasion, feminine wiles. *The Siamese Cats*, as beautiful as they are, have their occupation as radio DJs and rely on aggression just like men, able to fight and defend themselves. They are extremely active and yet still have their wiry female physique.

Monkey Punch has created a world of characters where the details are never told. Since this movie is a one-shot deal (so far) the girls' histories are lacking. Jun and Naomi work as DJs during the day, but work as The Cabinet Research Centre Anti-Terrorist Annihilation Corps. This show is like one large bake-off where Monkey punch provided the ingredients and the director's creative team cooked it all up to their taste. The story is simple: to destroy the terrorist Kaido! Sit down and forget your worries or the world's troubles and watch those two cute girls save the world! Also, military otaku will love the weaponry on display here, I bet! I hope there will be a second mission for these two.

The Siamese Cats: First Mission is directed by Masahiro Hosoda (*Tonbe Burin, Sailor Moon, Virgin Fleet*), on a script by Kihiro Ono, with character designs by Shingo Araki (*Ashita no Joe, Babel II, Cutey Honey, Danguard Ace, Kindaichi, Little Mermaid*) and Michi Himeno (both worked on *Amon Saga, Rose Of Versailles, St. Seiya, Ulysses 31, Yugioh*), music by Nao Kisugi and the voice talents of Megumi Hayashibara, Nami Koyama and Shuichi Ikeda.



Designs:	Animation:	Soundtrack:	Story:	Translation:	Average:
3	3.5	3	3.5	—	3.5

Siamese Cats: First Mission © 2001 Monkey Punch / Art Port / Maxell • eCube. DVD provided by www.cdjapan.co.jp.

SIAMESE CATS: CHARACTER & MECHANICAL FILES

Jun: She's skillful at fighting, one of the best at the Japanese Defense Force, and excellent at treating and dealing with guns. As for her character, she shoots first and asks questions later, not thinking things through first before acting. No one knows her history.

Naomi: She's also a skillful fighter, but with the power to analyze. Unlike Jun she thinks out logically before commencing any action. Therefore, she's good support for her hothead partner, advising her of the best course of action. No one knows her background either.

Awataguchi: The undersecretary of the Japanese Defense Force. He's the organizer for the Siamese Cats, which is a team of anti-terrorism experts. He looks serious most of the time, but cares for Japan's future a great deal – in his own way.

Ippei: He's an assistant to the Siamese Cats. To make a living he's the chief of a studio and collects information. He's skillful at transporting materials and weapons for Jun and Naomi. He's a professional driver. The archetype of Lupin!

Major Isurugi: The commander of the anti-terrorist corps. Mighty Dog. He works with the Siamese Cats in order to achieve the mission's objectives.

Shunuske Kaido: A very dangerous international terrorist called the Tiger of Asia. He used to be a member of the Japanese Self-Defense Force Jieitai, but left to join the conflicts in Africa and the Arabic Nations to satisfy his greed and stroke his ego. This time he's trying to acquire the Artemis, the next generation weapon of the Japanese Defense Force.

Miyuki: A female warrior and a follower of Kaido. She was brainwashed by him and will do anything for him. Her character is cold as ice and quite aggressive.

The Poisonous Insect Duo: They're detectives of the police station and comic foils to the Siamese Cats. They want to compete with Jun and Naomi, but they always arrive a little too late.

The Kid: Son of the scientist, he is the genetic key to the Ultimate Weapon.

Weapons

The Ultimate WMD!

Glock 26: Used by the Siamese Cats. It's very tiny (sub compact) so they can carry it in their tiny hands – extremely practical. Uses 9mm rounds.

Walther PPK/S: Many detectives use this special gun. The Gun Control Law, established in '68, forbade the import of certain types of weapons into the US; therefore this type of PPK was designed to slip through the loopholes and Americans could acquire this model. The most beautiful gun by Walther. Kaido's gun.

P-90 (Project 90): The guns of Mighty Dog. Although it may look small, it contains 50 bullets. A very unique form of gun.

Atomic Cannon: Ippei created this weapon that can collect all the nuclear power from a nearby plant.

The Siamese Cat Bombs: You can adjust the amount of gunpowder, thus able to destroy all sizes of objects. It can even destroy a whole building. When it's set to explode, the 'eyes' glow.

Military Transports

The Siamese HQ!

UH-1J Transport Helicopter: Miyuki's helicopter is used by the American military, and it's best for on the field combat. One of the best selling 'copters for all purposes, more than 10,000 of this model have been produced and sold all over the world.

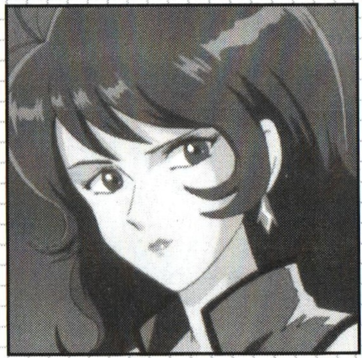
Small Type Submarine: This sub changes into a hovercraft. It's small and can only hold two passengers.

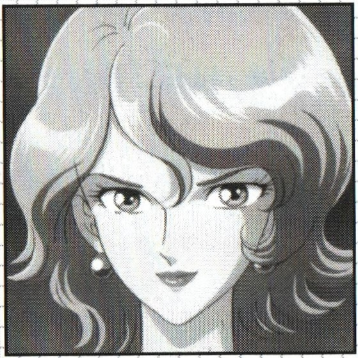
Hummer: Ippei's beloved car. This type is widely used in the USA and is used for combat, transport and rescue missions. Four passengers can ride.

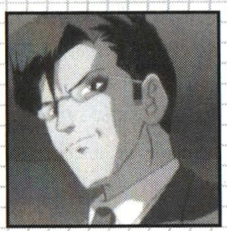
F-30: Based on the F-15 model, the latest jet fighter can show power. Most of the time this model is used to pinpoint targets to destroy. Excellent for combat use.

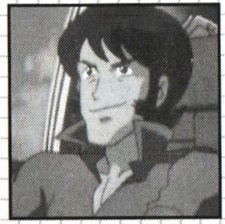
Type-90 Tank: In 1990 this model was created for the Japanese Self-Defense Force, Jieitai. It has high accuracy targeting and other high-tech equipment.

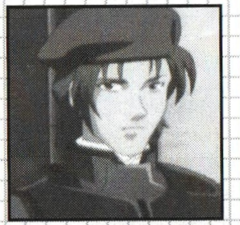
Police Tank: This model was picked up for the Japanese Self Defense Force. This six-wheel tank can go through difficult roads and terrain.

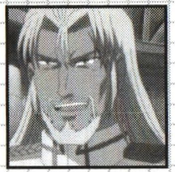


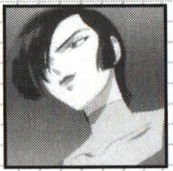


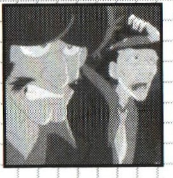


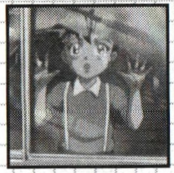


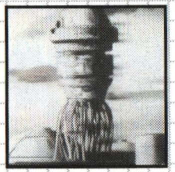


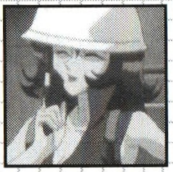


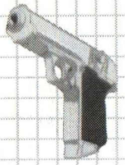


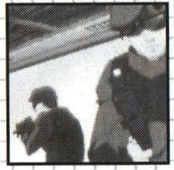


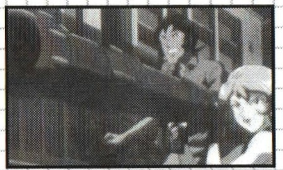


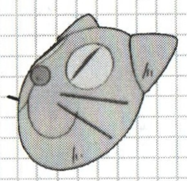


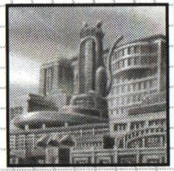


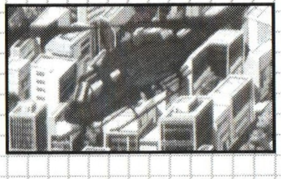


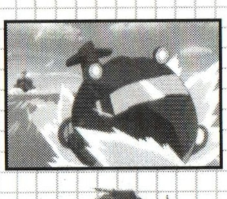


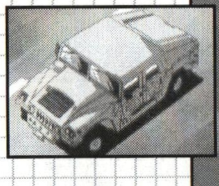


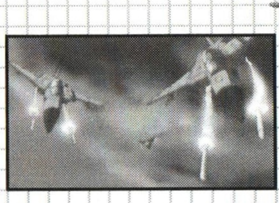


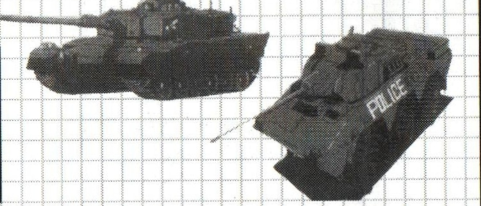




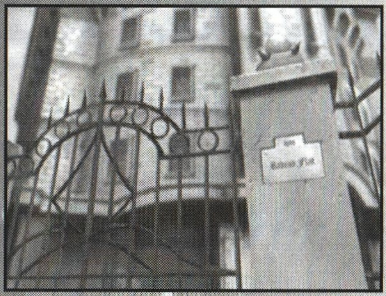


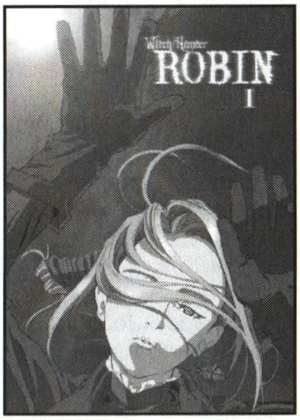




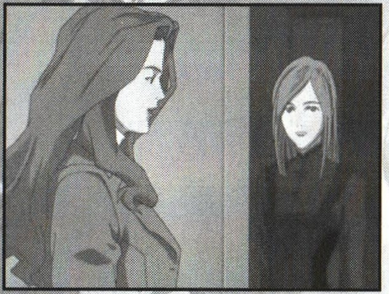


WITCH HUNTER ROBIN: OVERVIEW

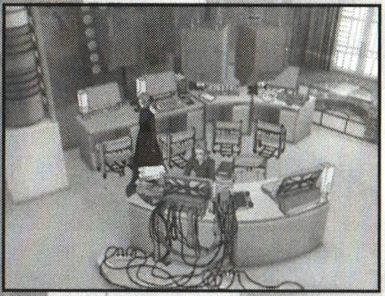


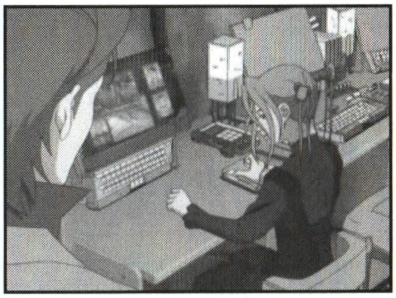


Sunrise Studio is offering a different and stylish fantasy show called *Witch Hunter Robin.* If you're a fan of dark mystery and magical power stories, hump into the 21st century of Witch Hunting. With sharp visual images created by director Shuukou Murase (he was designer for *Argento Soma*, *Gasaraki*, *Gundam W* and the *Street Fighter II* Movie) and character designer Kumiko Takahashi (she worked on *Birdy The Mighty*, *Call Me Tonight*, *Card Captor Sakura*, *DNA²*, *Tokyo Babylon*, but must not be confused with the creator of *Ranma 1/2*), this show will satisfy anime fans who crave a few spoonfuls of serious romance mixed into their witchcraft. TV Tokyo premiered the series on July 2nd 2002, which aired every Tuesday at 1:25 am until December 24th, for a total of 26 episodes. Sunrise is doing some serious anime here and the storytelling methods emulate the American style. But Robin and her colleagues will charm you.

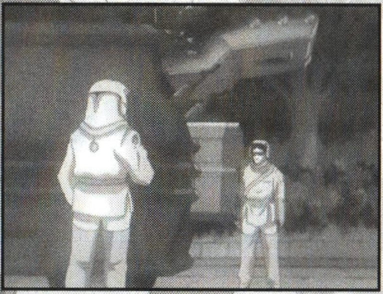


In ancient times humans were controlled by people with psychic and other mysterious powers, called the Gods. But as times changed humans began to control their world and arose to vanquish their oppressors, and began to persecute them as witches and devils. Gods became devils to humans because those mysterious powers are not natural for humankind. And in recent years witches (male or female, in this tale) committed many heinous crimes. To contain the witches humans created a shadowy, clandestine organization called Solomon. Its Action Corps, made of Witch Hunters ("W.H."), is called "STN". The heroine of our story is Robin, a 15 year old Witch Hunter with top class ability. She arrived to STN-Japan (headed by a man named ZaiZen) from the Italian Headquarters as a replacement for a Witch Hunter that was killed in action six months earlier. As the story progresses, young Robin begins to question this unreasonable practice of fighting witches, and this puts her at the mercy of her own cruel fate.

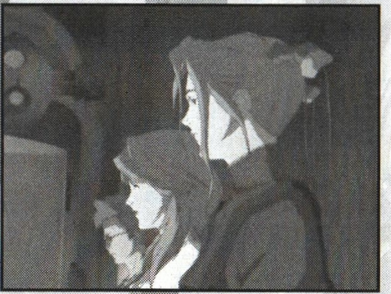


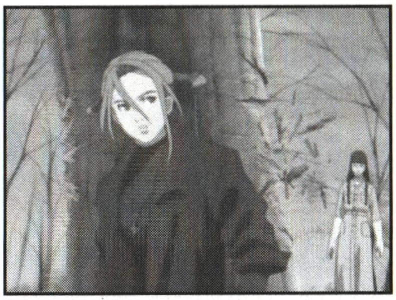


Director Murase offers calm, yet effective visual images and a solid story with neat characters (particularly Robin whose odd hairdo makes her look like a cross). Continuing the trend of computer animation, the background images are modeled in 3-D. Computers can surely do wonders! And it has a deep and profound effect and the visual quality of the show.



The first ten episodes were created as stand-alone stories. Each episode ends with the witch being captured, but often times things end tragically. Through witch hunting, all sorts of human relations are taking place and occasionally a secret or mystery is introduced. From episode 11 onward, things begin to change once Robin meets The Salem Witches. The STN-Japan office is attacked and is temporarily shut down. Robin's partner Amon disappears. The tables have turned and now the hunters have become the hunted. STN-Japan's boss ZaiZen appears to be more sinister as he begins to act against the principles of STN (which has a policy of "destroying" the witches) and capturing witches for his own dark purposes. What is this mysterious liquid called Orbo? Why is Robin becoming hunted herself?





Sunrise always offers shows with important, global themes, but in this case *Witch Hunter Robin* was created for entertainment value. It isn't really meant to be a detective mystery – so just sit back and enjoy the gothic atmosphere. All characters carry a complicated past and that adds spice to the story as well. A very conspicuous anime show with neat characters and images.

It will be released in North America by Bandai (Limited Edition: October 7th; Regular Edition: October 21st).

Designs: 4.5 Animation: 4 Soundtrack: 3.5 Story: 3.5 Translation: — Average: 4

Witch Hunter Robin © Sunrise. Video provided by Luciano. Special thanks to Bandai and KGI for providing the character designs and the cover illustration.

WITCH HUNTER ROBIN: CHARACTER PROFILES

Robin Sena: This 15-year-old was told she was born in Japan, but raised in Italy by a nun at a convent. She's sent to Japan as a replacement from STN headquarters in Italy. She's a Class A Witch Hunter and a craft-user — her craft is fire.

Amon: 25-year-old Amon is the leader of the Witch Hunters and Robin's partner. His mother was a witch and he still carries his dark past.

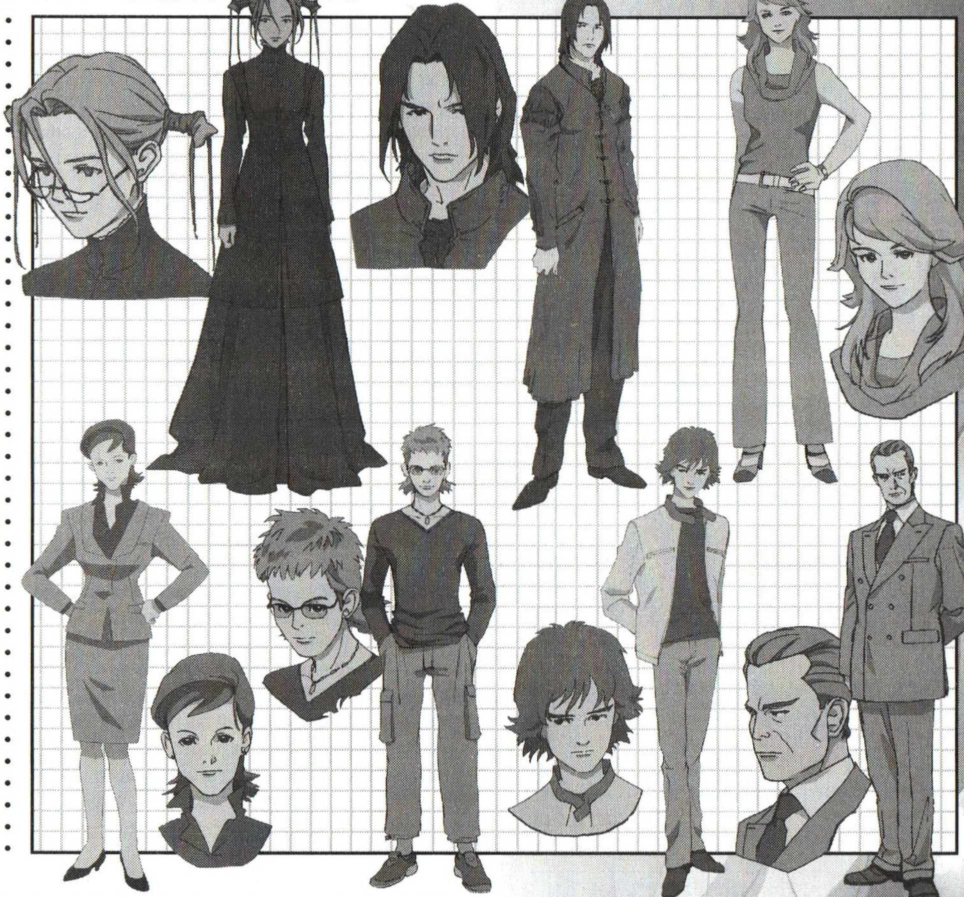
Yuri Dojima: She is a very low D class Witch Hunter. Yuri is 18 years old and behaves like a big sister to Robin.

Miho Kurasumaru: This 19-year-old S-class (higher than "A") can feels people feelings. But due to her power she tends to distance herself from others.

Michael Lee: A genius computer hacker, he entered illegally into the STN computer and learned the existence of witches and witch hunters. Now he's forced to work for STN by ZaiZen instead of going to jail.

Haruto Sakaki: His ability is a respectable Class B. For some reason, 17-year-old Haruto is jealous of Robin's ability.

ZaiZen: President of STN-Japan, ZaiZen is a calm gentleman, but quite cold underneath. He takes matters accordingly.



WITCH HUNTER ROBIN: SHORT SYNOPSES

1. Replacement

Robin arrives from Italy at the STN headquarters in Japan, located in the Raven Flat. She wants to see Amon, but he's already off on a witch-hunting mission. In the mean time she waits at Harry's café and, when ZaiZen and Dojima come to pick her up, she's off to her first mission.

2. Addicted to Power

Robin is staying with a Japanese friend, a 22-years-old Office Lady named Touko. She is supposed to be Amon's new partner, but she's left to wait at the Office. Amon is concerned by the inaccuracy of her skills.

3. Dancing in Darkness

A mummified corpse is found. Robin finds a bug within it and STN-Japan is busy investigating. Two more cases are reported. Who is making these mummies? It turns out that all the victims are descendants of witches. At the same time, the STN-Japan's computer is attacked by a hacker...

4. Stubborn Aesthetics

Amon gives a pair of glasses to Robin (he's probably hoping that it will improve her accuracy). She has been asked to check the files of unresolved cases. Robin and Miho decide to investigate a series of horrible murders that took place in a park where Robin walks on her way back from church...

5. Smell Like the Wandering Spirit

In the underground, Sakaki and Doujima find a suspicious homeless person who was so shocked that he left immediately. Sakaki thinks this person is a witch. Who is it and what power does this witch possess?

6. Raindrops

Robin's motorbike is out of gas in the middle of the road. A lady named Hideko offers her a ride in her car. Hideko looks like a career woman with an office job. But the next day Robin receives news that the woman was murdered. Robin, upset, wonders why...

Looking For Feedback!

We have decided to restart the Letters Column and we are inviting you to write us letters! What do you think about PA? What would you like to see in PA? What do you think about the state of the anime industry (both in Japan and in North America)? What's your favourite anime? Why? Etc. Please, keep your letter (or e-mail) short. Don't hesitate to send us name suggestions for the new Letters Column. And you can also send us your fan arts. Most interesting letters, name suggestions and fan arts will receive free goodies! Send your letters either to comments@protoculture.qc.ca or P.O. Box 1433, Station B, Montreal, Qc, H3B 3L2 Canada. [CJP]

Dear Protoculture Addicts Magazine

I recently bought your two issues, 67 & 68. Originally, I had bought them for specific articles, but I also read through both. I must say, I was quite impressed. In all honesty, I really didn't think there were any magazines out there that targeted anime fans like myself, so I was glad to see someone decided to dedicate an entire magazine to such an obssession. (...) I have to applaud the writers of the *Gatchaman* articles. They were so informative and witty in certain areas. But I must say, they made me wish I could view the original Japanese version of the show. I feel like I'm missing out on so much by only seeiong the English translations. I'm especially longing to see episodes 102-105, the show's climax. Yes, yet another female fan who is swayed by the "dangerous sex appeal" of Joe's! (...) I also enjoyed the interview with Janet Waldo. She gave me an insight as to how some of the cast felt about that particular job. (...) In closing, I just want to say keep up the good work.

Kimberley Reeser
Bath, PA

Hello Protoculture Addicts

Me, my brothers Abdullah and Azman & sister Asmah heard your cries of feeling like nobody reading your magazine. No way man, we love your magazine. I and my family members been reading your magazine since the first issue of your now defunct *Mecha Press* and *Protoculture Addict* issue #17. The best thing about your mag is your ratings on individual anime; your ratings really help us not to get easily confuse on what anime is a good or bad buys. Most of my anime collection is base on your ratings, not like some other anime magazine which only tell us reader what anime just release and that's it, no rating or anything. Your section on music and live movies is also an extra bonuses, I love them. Please don't change anything, you the best there is. My only suggestion about your magazine, is, how about having a section just for old anime, their reviews, a little synopsis, characters, whose their creators, etc. (...)

Abdul Fatah Bin Alwee
Singapore

Too Shinny

I prefer the good old paper, not this shinny Mag style. Only use it when you're doing colour.

Johnny
Australia

I agree with you. I hate reading a magazine that is so shinny that light reflects on the page and make it difficult to read. However, most of our North American readers seem to think that you are not a professional magazine if you are not glossy. I disagree, since I don't think the type of paper influences the quality of the information (that's what really counts after all). Less shinny papers (Matte or Silk) are quite expensive. Anyway, since the printer that was offering us the Gloss paper at a reasonable price doesn't seem reliable, we will have to go back to the old paper (and printer) for a while. Don't worry, we are not quitting our eternal quest to improve the magazine! [CJP]

Rant Letter

(...) most magazines would offer a reduced price to subscribers (and include free gifts). Your magazine asks its readers for their personal opinion. (...) your worthless anime reviews are just as bad as that fake reviewer controversy. I mean, 3 or 5 stars and a blurb tells me nothing about how good the anime is. (…)

Michael Leblanc
Campbellton, NB

We cannot give reduced price on subscriptions because, due to the high mailing cost (particularly for Canadian subscriptions), we are not making any money on them. We offer subscription only to help fans who don't have a comics or specialty store nearby. As for free gifts, we are a small magazine, we don't make much money and we are already doing our best to give the most to our readers. We try to offer once in a while some extra (poster, more color or pages) and give special deals on the web page. Our best gift is all the hard work that we are putting in the magazine. As for the reviews, most of the readers seem to consider them useful. But it is your right to disagree. What fake reviewer controversy? [CJP]

Dear PA

I'd like to pose a question for you folks North of the 49th parallel – what on Earth is going on with Canadian TV executives? (…) Canada used to be a great paradise for the anime fan. I remember how the French CBC (now Societe Radio Canada), Can-West Global, TV Ontario and Baton Broadcasting System (now defunct) used to air anime that you couldn't get in the U.S. at the time (...). Unfortunately, the last few years anime has seemed to be heading strictly to YTV or Teletoon, unavailable to American viewers unless they have special satellite dish (ah well, canadian viewers are also deserving of sympathy, they probably have their own difficulties getting Cartoon Network, ABC Family, Encore, Tech TV and International Channel). More dismaying, Canadian programmers are seemingly becoming content to act as satellites to American networks in airing animation, down to accepting American network-mandated defects in anime adaptation (...). Could you do an article sometime investigating how this lamentable trend came about? (…)

(…) Why do some shows air 13 episodes or less, while others have episodes numbering in the hundreds? (…) Why do anime shows air when they do, and do they have seasons like we do in North America? (…)

Finally, as much as I enjoyed your last issue on Miyazaki, I must quibble about one news item. *Firestorm* is DC Comics writer Gerry Conway's creation. I suspect you meant to refer to Gerry Anderson's *Fireball 4X5*.

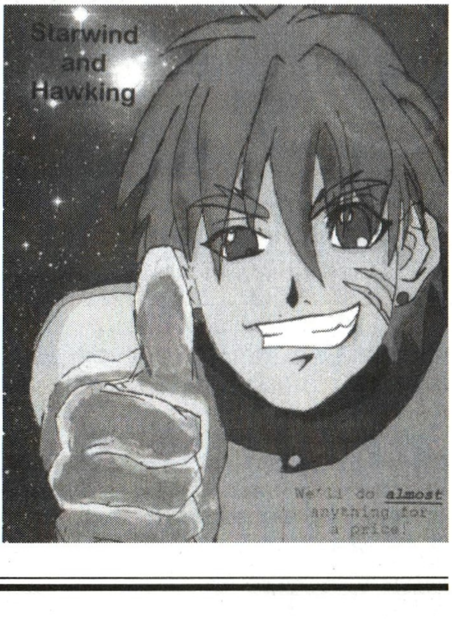
Gary L. Thompson.
Dearborn, MI

No need to make an article out of this, but I'll nevertheless try to be short. Up to the early '90s, lots of anime were imported into Canada from France. But, following pressure from the local Voice Acting guild and a neo-nationalistic trend, all shows were suddenly required to be dubbed locally, which made them more expensive than just importing them from France, and so the spring of abundant anime dried up. Anime is now mostly confined to specialized channels like YTV, Space and the horrible Teletoon, but they are still scarce because their budget are lean and anime is seen as being very violent (since some tragic events involving firearms, violence on TV has been made into the culprit and stations are now very wary of what they are showing). Also, to protect local producers and our "culture" there is this board, the CRTC, that requires all broadcaster to air a high percentage of shows with Canadian content, thus keeping us from getting US specialty channels like Cartoon Network, unless they have a "Canadian" version like Tech TV Canada (whose license doesn't allow to air fiction, meaning no anime). Because of all those limitations, local broadcasters just sublicense already edited, high rating shows from US stations, to make sure that they get them for cheap.

Until recently, the way anime was broadcast on Japanese TV was mostly determined by sponsors (toys and video games companies). Seasonal series (spring, fall) had 26 episodes, or some shows, like most *Gundam*, were running yearly with 52 episodes. Recently, there was a deregulation of TV in Japan, bringing tons of new satellite and PPV stations. Now, shows are paid more by the stations themselves (or, in fact, their subscribers) and less by sponsors, which give the producers a little more freedom to experiment with shorter series (hence the 13-episode series).

The anime *Firestorm* is indead based on a concept by Gerry Anderson (*Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlett*, etc). It is apparently a TV series idea that he never used. He made the mecha designs, but the character designs are by Kenichi Onuki (*Yotoden*, *Earthian*). The series is directed by Kenji Terada (who scripted *Dirty Pair* and *Orange Road*). [CJP]

And, finally, some fan art by Gina Gallego (San Mateo, CA):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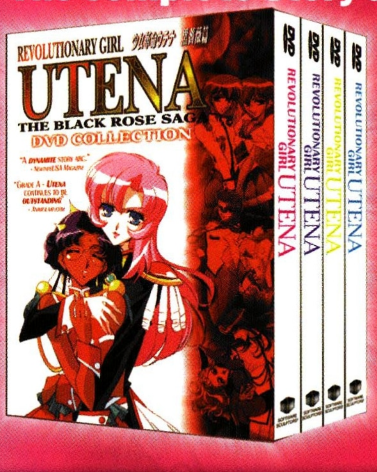
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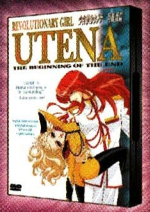
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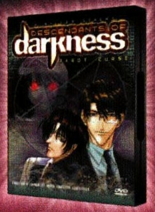
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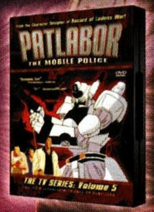
TAROT CURSE

Descendants of Darkness: Tarot Curse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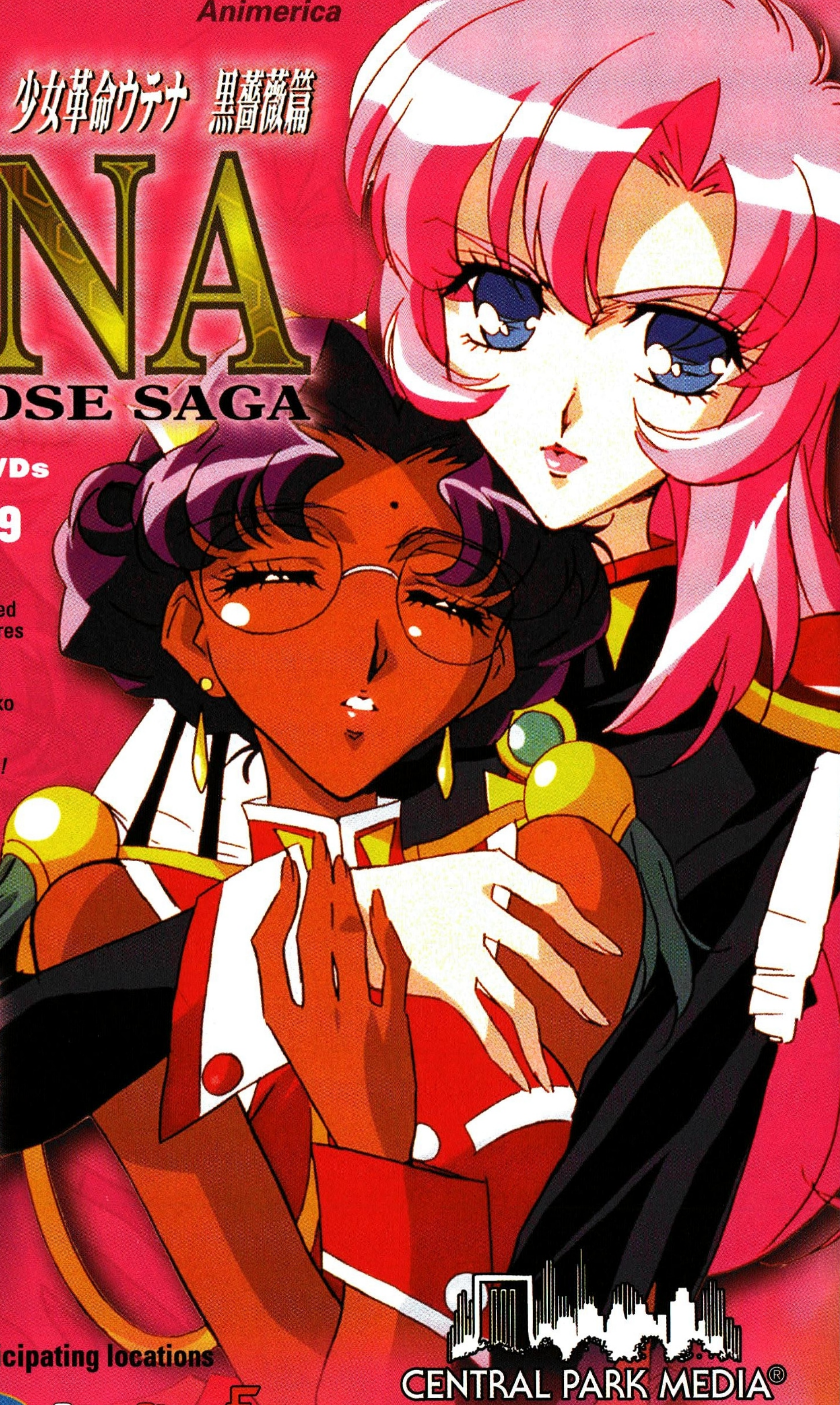

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